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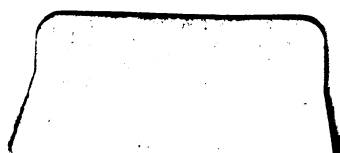
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HEADLAND HOME;

OR,

A SOUL'S PILGRIMAGE.

BY  
*Mrs. Emily P.*  
MADAME DE LESDERNIER.



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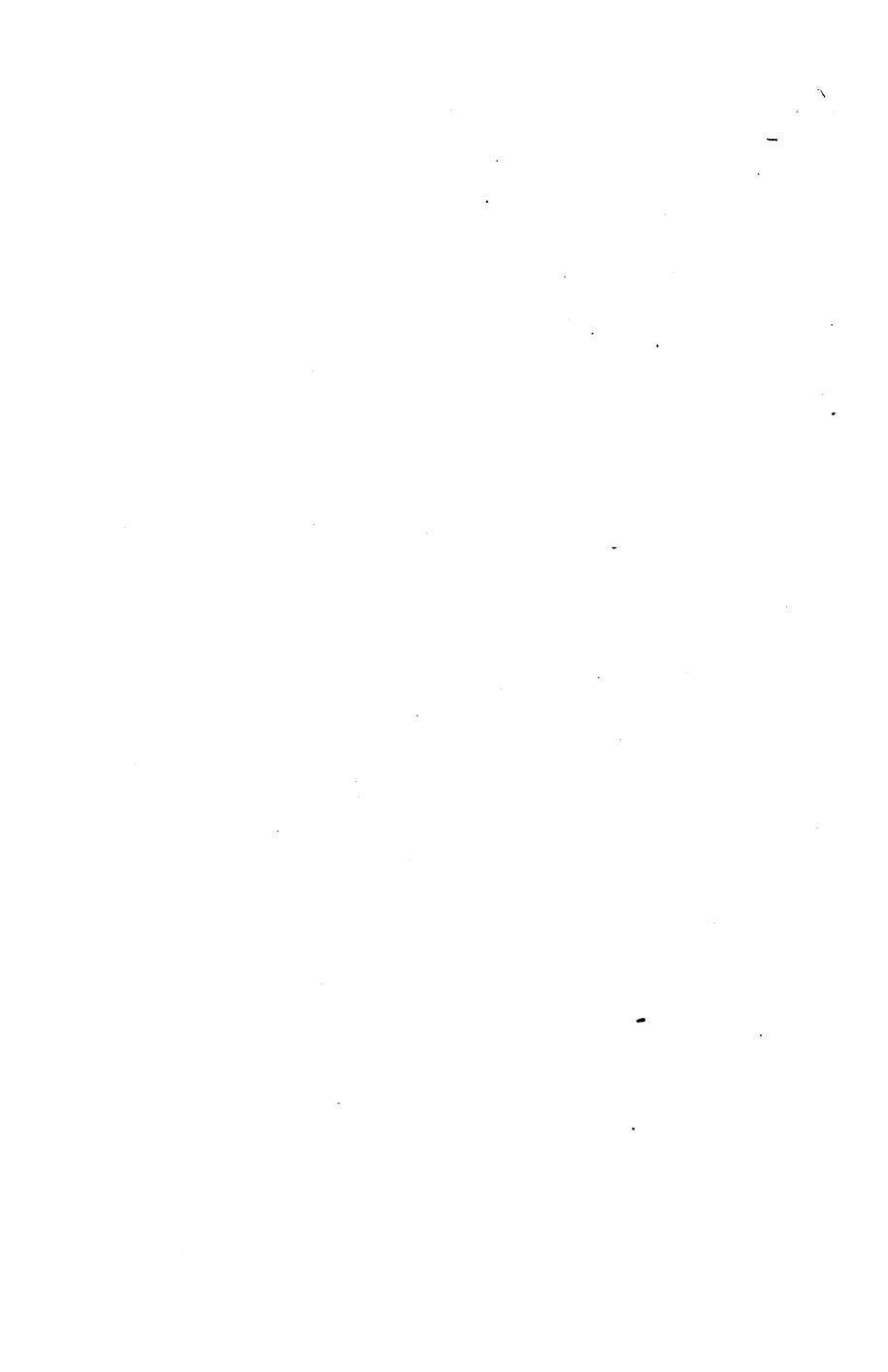
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Not only around our infancy  
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie ;  
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,  
We Sinais climb and know it not.

Over our manhood bend the skies ;  
Against our fallen and traitor lives  
The great winds utter prophecies ;  
With our faint hearts the mountain strives,  
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood  
Waits with its benedicite ;  
And to our age's drowsy blood  
Still shouts the inspiring sea.







## A WORD WITH YOU.

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THIS is a book of my life so far as I have lived ;—  
a life-drama !

They who have encountered similar experiences may perhaps find some slight consolation in comparing destinies. Aching hearts are relieved often by measuring the condition of others with their own. Though what is left of the past is but a photograph of light and beauty, yet flowers may bloom, and the soul grow young and glad, despite of all its saddening memories.

This is an autobiography. It tells the reader just what I have found life to be, as truthfully as I could describe it, and with that earnestness with which I have felt, and loved, and suffered.

It would be an interminable work if it told much of the human heart, for that is an endless and an

incomprehensible thing. In the gilded moments of my existence, thoughts have seemed to bring God's sunlight down to the valley where I have lived; and sometimes to lift me up to the mountain-tops that encircle his own Paradise.

I record facts, passions, feelings, experiences which have been crowded into a few brief years. If you regard the realities which are herein noted as fictions, then you will not sympathize with the writer so as to realize the scenes, which are, indeed, veritable histories. As you believe, so will you be interested in these pages.





# HEADLAND HOME.

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## CHAPTER I.

**F**RIEND of my heart! you say you miss me from the world in which you live, and would know what I am doing in my new home in the eastern land of pine-clad hills and rock-girded shores.

My new home is in the house where my father (dear venerated man!) once dwelt—in our old homestead, long deserted, but now refitted, and made tenantable.

The house stands on a bleak and barren headland on one of the most picturesque of the islands of the three hundred and sixty-five that dot the blue bay



of Passamaquoddy, that is said to be as beautiful in summer as that of Naples.

Passamaquoddy cradles its friendly waters between the opposing shores of Campobello and Moose Island : the one, subject to the rule of Her Majesty Queen Victoria—the other, one of the jewels of Uncle Sam's diadem of States.

My island home! Come, and see if it is not beautiful.

My home in the house on the rock! Here I sit and muse in the turret-chamber, where my father sat, like an eagle in his eyrie, watching "the stately ships go on to their haven under the hill."

My father's house! Pardon the fond delight of one so long an alien. I am rapturous as a child. My home! Here, when the night has darkened down, are displayed those northern streams of splendor, flashing like glimpses of immortal light from the polar zone.

Night! blessed night! then is the fisherman's harvest-hour. With the pitch-knot lighted, flaring and blazing at his shallop's prow, he casts the net into the phosphor-gleaming sea; but, as he plies

his solitary oar, he hears strange murmurings in the breeze that skims and ruffles the gently-heaving ocean. To cheer his loneliness, he chants a stave of bygone time from some rude ballad that tells how the pirates of the Scorpion once infested this eastern coast, and forced a maiden, just in her May of life, to walk the dreadful plank, and, vainly struggling, to drink a briny death ; and this full in the view of her lover, who, bound in irons on the deck, saw her perish. A wailing voice, like the lone plover's cry, sounds over the watery waste, and thrills with mysterious awe the chanter, who grimly smiles at his own foolish fancies, and puffs his cheeks to whistle to the wind, though not a sound is heard.

The skies smile on the toil of the fisher ; the sea teems with life ; his nets are full ; he quenches his torch in the hissing waves, where so long ago the fire of that young maiden's love went out. He pulls his boat shoreward with a steady dipping oar ; and then he retires to his humble cottage—to dream, perhaps, of the struggles of drowning men, of gold and gems, of silks of Tyrian dye, and of all the wealth which the ocean caverns hold.

I remember that my father often placed me on a low bench, between his knees, my head just up to his heart, as we sat fondly together in the turret-chamber through the clear afternoons. He, with his spyglass, gazed upon the ships in the distance or contemplated those at anchor in the bay. For years he held the first office under the Government in the revenue department, and it was his duty to keep a sharp lookout for smugglers.

I love the old place, wild and lonely as it is. I like the inhabitants of this out-of-the-way district, simple and illiterate as most of them are. Their quaint oddities please me, when I am in a humor to be amused; and, once a month, just to keep up a spirit of sociality and good feeling among the neighbors, I give an entertainment in the old hall, and ask all the children to make merry at the feast. The place does not look dismal to them. They are charmed with the bright china, and nicely flavored cakes, fruits, and sweetmeats, which I prepare with my own hands, for I must make somebody glad in spite of my sterner moods. The happy, dimpled faces, tanned and rough by ex-

posure, delight me. They are the sunshine of my life. I like children for friends. You are sure of their unsophisticated hearts.

Perhaps I am at times misanthropic. The sickly refinements of society pall upon the senses. Hate, envy, pride, and ambition lurk around the corniced galleries, or stand discontented in the niches of the lofty halls. The orgies of dissipation are considered the classical acquirements of society by those who minister at these shrines. Whatever I may be, I believe that solitude is my heritage, and I must learn to enjoy it. I am a miser of time. I hoard every moment, but I have more to give my friends than when I lived in the world.

I have not forgotten that you have often besought me, with

"Prayer of earnest heart,  
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,  
Whereof by parcels you have something heard;"

that I should tell you, soul to soul, the story of my life. It is, so far as I can judge, an every-day experience only, yet it seems to have been full of changes for me. Such as it is, it shall be made known to you.



## CHAPTER II.

**T**HERE are times when scenes and impressions long past come upon us with magical power ; when remembrances of other days stand out before the mind's eye with a stronger coloring and outline than those of the present. Although the hurrying events of each successive hour may seem to sweep from the memory many events in which we have been actors, and we deem them buried past recall, yet, in some moment of half-forgetfulness, the soul, retiring within itself, ponders unconsciously upon the past, until we are startled from our revery by the intense reality of our remembrances. Faces and forms, which have been long wrapped in the cerements of the grave, stand before us in the warmest colors. We can almost fancy the sweet breath playing upon our cheeks,

and that we hear the voices, whose familiar tones are forever hushed, ringing merrily in our ears.

There came two brothers, exiles, from Switzerland, Carl and Gustav de Thou; and after many months of wandering they settled on this eastern shore, and made their home on this island.

Carl was my grandfather: his brother pined in exile, and could not rest; and after a time he again became a rover, and went to pitch his tent on the great western prairies.

The family history is, for the most part, a sealed book to me. My father was twice married, and was an old man when he took to wife my fair and blooming mother. She was of French descent, and had gentle Norman blood in her veins. She bore my father two children, of which I was the younger; and, when born, I was the only one of whose existence they felt sure, for a horrible uncertainty hung over my brother's fate.

I scarcely dare say how early in my infant life I comprehended the story of the loss of Carl. As soon as I could speak, I was never tired of asking questions concerning him, or of listening to recitals.

of the melancholy theme; and when I was but the merest infant I saw the sadness in my mother's face, and I knew why the tears streamed over her pale cheeks.

I tried to divert and soothe her. Occasionally I fancied I did so, by shouldering a wooden mallet, and trudging out of doors to the corner of the house, to beat an enormous iron kettle—for what purpose it was there I never knew). To my young fancy the ringing echoing sounds that I produced upon it were most ecstatic music. Then back I would go to note its effect on her, till, at last, weary with rejected failures, I would run to nurse Tibby and beg her to rock me in her arms, and tell me about my lost brother.

Carl was a brilliant, active little fellow, full of courage and daring, a real child of the eyrie. One day when my parents were absent from home on a short visit to some friends on the opposite shore, the boy was left in the care of a domestic, who had always been faithful, but inadvertently she proved untrue to her charge.

Carl was in the habit of spending a great portion

of his time at play in a small boat, which was moored at the beach, in sight of my mother's window. There he would sit for hours, rocking himself to the dancing waves, or making short excursions to the huge black rocks within reach of the length of the line by which the boat was fastened. He called them his "castles." It had been considered perfectly safe to allow him to amuse himself thus, until that inauspicious day. He was at his accustomed pastime; the tide was setting swiftly seaward, the painter that attached the boat to the shore was broken, and the little voyager drifted out of sight.

My parents returned to their home at night to find a horror of which they could never have dreamed.

Every effort for the discovery of the child's fate that parental love and wisdom could suggest proved unavailing. The boat was found, but no trace of the boy, and from that day they knew but this, that Carl was not.

There had been no sickness, no visible death, no little shrouded body to be laid in consecrated



ground ; none of those last dear sad offices, performed by the hand of love, that make the aching heart lighter, even in its heaviness. The gloom of the pall and bier fell upon my parents' hopes, as days and weeks went by, and there were no tidings of the child. It might have been that some vindictive smuggler whom my father had frustrated in his unlawful traffic had stolen the child. It was just possible he might have been picked up by some ship outward bound. It was a consoling hope, yet the doubt was almost as hard to bear as would have been the certainty of his death.

They said, "The dear little infant Emile came, like a gleam of sunshine, to illumine the darkness." I enjoyed a few years of happy childhood—few and short.

My father, who was one of the most eccentric of men, became at once my tutor and playfellow. We were constant companions. His great delight was in boating and in visiting wild and desolate tracts of land ; in botanizing, and, in spite of wind and weather, he would take me with him, though sorely against my mother's inclinations. It re-

quired our united efforts to conquer her aversion to these aquatic and botanical excursions. So venturesome were our wanderings regarded, even by the fearless boatmen about the islands, that they gave my father the soubriquet of Neptune; and a rude boy made me cry one day by calling me "old Neptune's daughter."

On these fearless expeditions, no matter how our egg-shell of a boat might be threatened, no matter how tipsily the waves might roll and toss their white caps to the squally sky, my father would never permit me to flinch for a moment, or to shrink from my place. I had often a mind to crouch down and cover my eyes from the terrible view of the sea. He would exclaim—"Sit up, my girl! sit up, and face the danger boldly! This is nothing to what you must encounter in your voyage through life, and, perhaps, without a pilot to bring you safe to land! Be not afraid of the storm and you shall ride above it!"

His encouraging tones always reassured me, and I did "sit up," and smile, too, in the very face of the tempest.

Through bad management and too great confidence in the honor of other men, my father lost his entire property. His official position was now consigned to a younger aspirant for the place, and we were almost beggared. Even the house we lived in could not be called our own. It was very hard for my father, when he was far advanced in years, to feel that he must quit this home, and that his wife and child must be turned upon the world penniless. It was not surprising that reason was hardly under his control. He soon became as dependent as an infant on my mother's care, and yet it was thought best that she should leave him, for a little time, and she and I went together to some relatives of hers in a distant part of the State.

My father bade us farewell on the beach, by the side of the sea, so soon to roll between us.

"Emile," said he, "comfort and take care of your mother."

The tears were in his eyes, and the wind tossed his white hair, and he spoke very sadly.

"Father," I replied, "I will always be your little philosopher."

He had taught me to call myself so. He took both of us in his arms, and called us his only treasures.

Then I was lifted into the boat, and clung to my mother, weeping silently ; but I heard the monotonous jarring of the oars between the thole-pins, and knew that we were shooting swiftly from the shore. Looking back, I saw my father still upon the beach, waving with his handkerchief a last adieu. Just then the boat changed tack, we turned the point of a headland, and were lost to sight. In a few moments more we had boarded the vessel. The sails were unfurled—we dropped slowly down the Narrows. I fixed my eyes on each well-remembered point of land, as one after another hove in sight, and strained my vision till the last glimmered in the misty distance. “Grandmanan,” “Petitmanan,” “Quoddy Light,” all faded successively in dim uncertainty, and the cloud-banks received my silent, sorrowful farewell.

The voyage was altogether very uncomfortable, but I do not remember many of the incidents. I know the nights seemed interminably long, as I lay

awake beside my mother and listened to the creaking of the rigging, as the wind whistled through it. But that was not all that kept me wakeful; for I heard besides my mother's whispered prayer.

I have listened to prayers, in fine churches, from the lips of men whose business it is to pray. I have heard prayers at the blessed family altar, where were gathered a happy band of loved ones—sweet, earnest prayers, of thankfulness and blessing. I have heard trembling souls plead at the mercy-seat of God. I have heard the dying pray for life, and the living pray for death, as though death were the Lethe of forgetfulness. But I have never heard a prayer, or voice of supplication, like my mother's pathetic utterances, on the wide ocean, in the dismal night, in the narrow berth of the cabin of that ship that bore us from home, and friends, and love. Her faith was strong, even in the hopeless darkness of that hour. It was an agony of prayer—a prayer which Christ would pity—yet not a prayer of fear. It was one of intercession for those who were dearer to her than her own life. I was still as death. My mother thought

I slept. She never knew her child was watching while she prayed.

Our vessel was a poor one. We sailed very slowly, and were detained at a desolate and out-of-the-way port by an adverse wind. After that a part of our journey was overland, and the remainder by boating upon a river.

We had been nearly two weeks from home, when my mother received intelligence of my father's increased illness, and a demand for her return. There was no alternative. She must go back to him.

The people with whom we were tarrying (for we had not yet reached our final destination) desired that I might be left with them. They said—"She is a handy little girl, and will be useful to tend the baby."

I believe, by the generally understood laws of gratitude, they were greatly indebted to my mother's family for some favor rendered long enough before to be nearly forgotten.

The "handy little girl" did not quite like staying alone with strangers; but she saw it would be

better for the mother to go without her, and so her sobbing consent was given.

My mother left me, with perfect confidence that such kindly care would be extended as she would have given to another, under like circumstances, till she should send or come for me.

All went smoothly for a time. Tasks were set for me, and I accomplished them. As they were enlarged, I exerted myself to the utmost to meet them.

The weeks went by, and my mother did not return.

I watched long and wistfully, with my face close to the window-pane, as the twilight drew on, night after night, until it was too dark for me to see any longer down the dark way that led to the mill, through which she must pass to come to me. No tidings of her arrived. At least, none were communicated to me. I was busy out of doors, helping to pile large heaps of brushwood (always an encumbrance of new clearings), until it was made into a mighty mound and set on fire. I enjoyed the sport finely. My contentment, however, could

not last; for I saw, with dismay, that a change had come over my keepers. I was told that if I wanted bread to eat I must earn it. I felt ready and willing, but I said to myself—"I am such a little girl, what can I do? Oh that my mother would come and take me away!" But for me the warfare of life had already commenced. I took my place in the ranks, unconscious of what was before me. I had none of the consolations of companionship with those of my own age.

There were but the two houses and the mill for miles around us. It was a pretty, wild dell, and the newly-burnt land yielded its fruits almost without tillage—simple productions, vegetables and berries of every description. If I had dwelt there alone with those who loved me, I could have been happy forever. But I pined for the tenderness to which I had been accustomed, and was harshly rebuked. My birthday was near—my eighth birthday—and I said, "Surely, now I shall see her!"

The day dawned, waxed, waned, and set—yet she did not come.



A few days after this, Dame Coffin, my mistress, cut off my beautiful hair.

The only charm I could claim were those glossy brown curls, which my dear mother had taken such pride in smoothing over her slender white fingers. I prized them, for *she* had called them "beautiful," and kissed my forehead when she said it. I thought it was robbing her to take them from me; but the few tears I dared to drop, in silent pleading, were unavailing. Shears had never touched my locks before, and it seemed, as they clashed in my hair, that the nerves in my neck were being snapped off one by one. I was a nervous child. My long, bright curls lay at my feet, and I was too simple to know the head from which they had been shorn would yield more, and really felt, for a little while, as if the loss were irretrievable.

They took away the tasteful frocks belonging to me, and dressed me in gowns made of coarse blue checked cotton, very narrow in the skirt—made, as I thought then, on purpose that I should tear them when I ran, in order to have something to scold me

for. Later, I learned that it was to save cloth. Worst of all indignities, I was not allowed to wear shoes and stockings, except on Sundays.

I felt strange sensations the first time I found myself out of doors barefooted, but the weather was mild, and although I sometimes trod on sharp stones, or a thorn pierced the tender flesh, I managed to wash off the blood with my tears, and limp away on my various errands.

My tasks came to be so many and excessive, that I found little time for sorrow, and less for joy. It was "Emile here!" and "Emile there!" until I fairly hated the sound of my own name. There was not a service that it was possible for me to perform that I was not called upon to execute it.

Did it ever occur to you, reader, how people manage to sweep their floors where brooms cannot be procured? I will tell you—and "thereby hangs a tale;" for in that country brooms were dear. The sanded floors were always flourished off in waves, or shells, or some odd fancy, with a large tuft of hemlock branches, tied neatly and strongly to a handle; and a very nice brush do the boughs make, barring

the scattered spiculæ, when they become a little crisp from age. A fresh one was required once a week at least.

To me was given the task of gathering from the woods branches of the proper size ; but I was not permitted to depart on such errands until the work was "done up," late in the afternoon.

When once amid the deep shade of the forest, its solemn stillness filled me with an indescribable, tranquil pleasure. The trees stood to me for my familiar friends. Each one within a certain circle was individualized and named for somebody that I loved. I talked to them, and fancy, in return, conjured the sound of the wind in their waving tops into words of tenderness and welcome. Occupied with pleasant reveries, I forgot the time, the hour, and everything connected with the half-civilized beings who claimed my duty, when the sound of my name, mingled with a faint holloa, tingled through my ears, and aroused me at once to my situation. I was suddenly aware that I was in the woods ; that trees were all around me, and that yet the boughs for my broom were ungathered. That

sound, from some leather-lunged individual, meant in effect, "Emile, you good-for-nothing! come right along this minute, with that ere broom-stuff, or you'll catch it!"

In an instant my songs and converse with the trees were hushed; and, with hurried scramblings, I tore from my stately friends a few of their branching honors, and forcing my way through the mazes of underbrush, stood, panting and frightened, in the presence of Dame Coffin. My trophies were examined. Ah, luckless child! I had "wasted the time in play." There was "nothing fit for a broom!" I was scolded for an idle hussy, and the branches were whipped about me until there was nothing left but broken twigs. And so I must go back disgraced, blinded with tears, choking with sobs. Thus I retraced the path to what seemed my only friends.

It certainly was an error to allow pleasure to hinder me from duty.

My daily routine embraced a great variety of occupations;—bringing water from the spring at the foot of the hill, at some little distance from the

house ; digging potatoes for the pigs and people, which was in itself no small amount of labor ; tending the baby—a nice plump child, of a year old, whom I dearly loved ; watching, not only our sheep, but those of neighbors, to keep them out of the cultivated fields ; and, while at this last task, I was expected to do double duty in the shape of knitting socks for the good-man of the house.

Besides this, certain tasks at knitting were set for me, to be finished before sunset ; otherwise, I should go supperless to bed. It was well to keep me busy, but cruel to visit my shortcomings so severely.

Two several times I was whipped. Once for the falsehood of our neighbor's boy ; the second and last, for tearing a handful of hair from my own head, in a fit of passion.

I had been commanded, in an ungentle voice, to perform what I conceived to be a degrading act. My pride rebelled. I did their bidding, but hated myself for having submitted ; and, twisting my hand in my hair, I tore out and threw a handful on the floor.

It was a challenge for an encounter in which I knew the odds would be fearfully against me. But a spirit of daring possessed me for the moment. I cared not what might follow. I felt insulted. Young as I was, my heart was swelling with contempt of the authority to which I was compelled to submit. "There I maddened." The woman seized the lock of hair with furious joy; and, as she rushed out of doors, I anticipated my doom. She quickly returned with a stout willow rod; and, catching me firmly by the wrist, left me the liberty of swinging about at the length of our two arms distant from her person, while she showered lashes on my bare neck and shoulders. I little dreamed there was a blow in reserve for me that would make the rest unfelt. I shrieked, "My mother! I will tell her that you have beaten me!"—"No you won't; for *she is dead!* I have been waiting for a good chance to tell you; and now is the time!"

The willow withe whistled in the air, and fell again on my unconsciously writhing flesh; but I did not feel it. I sank on my knees, lifting my hands, blue with the wales raised by the rod, and

cried, "Then she is in heaven, and she will take me from you. You dare not strike me again!"

The woman said not a word, but, turning, went out of the room, closing the door gently after her.

There I sat in the dusky evening; not a tear dropped from my fixed eyes. I recalled the image of my mother's pale thin cheeks. I could not bear to believe her dead. I tried to think, "What is it to be dead?"

I once had seen a little playmate in her coffin, and they told me she was dead. I could not see how it differed from sleep. They placed her in the dark and lonely tomb, and left her there. Another thing puzzled me. One day, when I lived with my parents, I saw some children weeping bitterly.

"What ails you?" I asked.

"Our mother is dead," they replied; and now "My mother is dead," I thought, "and I cannot cry. Did they then love their mother more than I did mine?"

Then I pictured the room at home, and she lying there, still and cold, like little Florence in her last sleep. The image grew vivid. It seemed to me

that I stood in the well-remembered place. There my mother was before me ; but to all my askings she answered not a word. Then I longed to touch her, but could not stir. I knew that tears would cool my burning eyes, if I could but rest a finger on her cold brow. I tried to drag myself forward, but something held me back. Then I relapsed into strange quiescence, and sat quite still, thinking—"How do they know she is dead?" "How dare they fold her away in the dark, and say she is dead?"

The word had a new and awful significance. I spelled it over and over again, but I could not fathom the sense. It rang through the arches of thought away in interminable vistas of forever and ever. I was baffled, brain-weary, and I sank into a state of torpor. Then I saw a vision that to me was a reality. It has comforted me through life.

I saw that the last day had come, and the great hour of the separation of the goats from the sheep, of the just from the unjust. The holy Jesus had come to judge the world. I saw him gloriously arrayed, his face unlike the pictures I had seen. I



cannot describe it. It was the glory of the sun, the paleness of the moon, and the flashing of star-like rays that combined to make it so beautiful.

I thought that, taking me in his arms, and lifting me above the multitude gathered around, he said—"Suffer little children to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven," and then he placed me beside my mother. I did not know where, but it was light, and warm, and blissful, and my mother's kiss brought the tears in a perfect gush to my eyes. I wondered that I wept when I was so happy.

I asked her to beg the good Lord that I might stay with her. She gently replied—and there could not be sweeter music than her voice—"All will be well!" and the vision faded from my sight.

I never breathed her name to those who so cruelly apprized me of her death. But there was no more anger in my grieved heart. They might have trodden me under foot—I should not have resented it.



### CHAPTER III.

**O**NE day in the week was mine—all my own. I had liberty to go where I pleased, and to do what I liked. That day was the Sabbath. There was no divine worship within boating distance, and no mission-preacher ever found our small colony in the midst of the eastern wilds. So I strolled about in the woods, singing hymns my mother had taught me at our own fire-side ; or, taking my testament, I sat down on the beach, to watch the coming in of the tide, and read the "Revelation," then my favorite study. Or I went to the spring in the dell, and laughed at the crop-haired little blackamoor grinning back at me from its smooth surface. And then, to make myself more hideous, I wove garlands of the wild-flowers and leaves growing about its borders, and

twined them about my sunburnt face, and laughed again at the tawny smiler in the water-mirror.

I knew it was myself, and yet coquetted with it as though it must be somebody else. Then I would hunt the four-leaved clover ; and when it was found, would wish—wish—I hardly knew what to wish, but that somebody who loved me would come and take me home—*home* ! Then the thought of my old home, of my parents, would make me so sad, that I would go down to the beach again, and watch the great waves tumbling the sea-weed on the shore. A little way down the bank stood a tree, half shivered by some furious storm, and half of it was green ; but on the bare and ghastly limb, which seemed just breaking from the parent stem, a gray old eagle rocked quite at his ease, and I thought he looked at me, and felt quite sure he was defying me to look into the face of the sun, as he could do. But I was not to be defied. So I fixed my eyes upon the glare of the fiery luminary with the utmost bravado. I wonder now that it did not injure my sight. Thus I took lessons in sun-gazing from the eagle. There is not a doubt that he in-

tended carrying me off, and was making up his mind as to his chances of success, considering my weight and his own strength of beak and talon. As the feat was not undertaken, I suppose he finally thought me too heavy; perhaps he felt too much sympathy with a being as wild and solitary as himself.

The season of sunshine, and flowers, and bird-songs went by, and no one who loved me was there to take me away, for all my wishing.

The balm of Gilead trees yielded no more their pleasant odor, and the scentless air pined for the lost fragrance. The chilly winds piped drearily in the night-time through the chinks of the half-finished dwelling. The later autumn days brought with them the sharp frosts so common in that northeastern corner of the world.

Oh, the frosty mornings! What a thick white coat covered the earth! How my bare feet ached with the cold, and how I stopped, on my way to the spring, and turned over the pine chips lying in the path, and stood on "the warm side," as I called it, to ease the smart for a moment! When

the snow had fallen they gave me some heavy stiff shoes to wear, without stockings ; and all through the long cold winter I slept in the comfortless garret, with a scanty allowance of bedding—I, who had never before slept out of my mother's bosom !

I approve of children's being plainly fed, but I did not approve of the method in which my suppers were served ;—a bowl of hot water and molasses, with coarse bread made of musty meal ; and, to make it more unpalatable, it was frequently spiced with “spills” from a twig of the hemlock broom, which Dame Coffin thrust into the nose of the tea-kettle before pouring the water into my bowl.

She gave as an excuse for this that there was “something in the spout of the plaguey thing !” There certainly was “something in it” afterwards, of which I had the full benefit—a nauseous mixture. If I refused to eat I was called sulky and stubborn, and told that I could have nothing until that was eaten. So I gulped down the villainous compound with wordless haste. That done, I was hurried away into the cellar for the remainder of the

evening, with a very dull light in a little black lamp. There lay the crowning labor of the day.

To the dainty mother, who clasps in her soft palm the rosy fingers of her gentle, bright-eyed girl, I will say, prepare for a slight shock to your refinement of feeling.

To her who steals to the nursery to feast her eyes on the new-born treasure, lulled in the almost breathless sleep of infancy—so still that the mother's heart pauses in its beatings, while her ear is bent hastily to the little dimpled face for assurance that the precious thing is breathing at all—I would say, if you could not bear for your child so stern a change, from that calm sleep beneath your watchful eyes, to wrong, neglect, and suffering among the careless and cold-hearted, then let your heart warm to the motherless children, the tattered wanderers, begging from door to door for bread. For if, from the accident of birth, they never may have known a mother's tenderness, so much the more they need it now. In every soul, however blinded or degraded chance may have made it, there is still a yearning for sympathy, a love for the beautiful and

true. A few kind thoughts, instead of a scornful crust, the beggar's usual dole, may be food and clothing to the famished heart.

Behold a mother, in faded weeds, regarding with mournful solicitude the slender, hollow-cheeked girl she leads by the hand to "the place" she has got for her, with a family that will be "very kind to the child." This woman, almost stifling with concealed grief, has learned that her widowed heart can bear another pang and yet not break. Sister in sorrow, my tears answer hers! To others I will say, for you a similar misfortune is possible.

I had helped to plant, and helped to dig; and now I must assort the potatoes, separating the large from the small, the good from the bad. This was my employment through many of the long winter evenings. But there comes an end to all things in time, and so ended my last night in the lonesome cellar.

I had been busy all day, much of the time out in the bleak wind, and at nightfall, as I was pacing the room with the little child in my arms, singing

it to sleep, the mother of Dame Coffin, who sat watching me over her spectacles, at length said :

“Emile, a’n’t you tired?”

“No,” I replied, surprised at the kindness of her voice, as she made the unusual inquiry ; “I am never tired so long as I can do any good.”

The aged woman gave me a slight smile of approval, and added :

“I have counted thirty pails of water you have brought from the spring to-day, and I thought you might feel tired ;” and she sighed as though the thought tired her.

I felt glad that anybody thought I had a right to weariness ; but, by that token, I felt sadder. I laid the little child in the cradle, and took the lamp to go to my evening’s work. Feeling sick and dizzy, as I laid my hand on the latch, I turned to look again in the face of the only human being there who seemed to appreciate my industry. A great cry arose in my heart for compassion, for love and tenderness. There was none for me. My mute asking was unheeded. That withered woman plied her knitting-needles, and jogged the cradle, without



even so much as lifting her head, or in any way noticing that I was appealing to her.

Lifting the wooden latch, I stepped down the cellar-stairs, and commenced my toil. The hands did not move with their usual alacrity, and at length ceased. The machine was overwrought. The spirit was willing, but the muscles rebelled. I had a strange feeling in my head, and it was burning hot. My hands trembled and were unequal to their office. I thought of my mother, and for the first time since I had so rudely learned of her death, tears and sobs came to my relief.

Very sad are the tears of the young. Sad is the choking sob from youth, when expedience or necessity causes the severing, for a space, of the dear home-ties. In some cases the heart grows tenderer and stronger than before ; but in others, when sternness checks the warm current too suddenly, the soil becomes arid, yielding no more the heavenly manna.

Fearful are the sobbings of young children ; the sensitive, feeble children, feeling as keenly as those far beyond them in years, yet wanting strength to

contend with the waves of the turbulent tide of emotion.

Fathers and mothers, watch well over the first storm that shakes the young flowers in your garden of love. Weeping alone in that ghostly earth-cell, my heart bursting with anguish and the fire and pain of my passion, there fell a mighty ringing on my ears. I believe that I swooned, for my next recollections were of somebody with strong arms lifting me, carrying me up stairs, and placing me in a warm bed. There was a fire burning on the hearth, and a light was on the table; and I knew it was Dame Coffin's room, but felt too sick to be surprised.

I was ill and feverish several days, perhaps weeks, and scarcely knew how time went by.

After I became convalescent I was better cared for, and they were much kinder to me.

So the winter passed, and the beloved summer returned.



## CHAPTER IV.

**I** HAD been at the settlement nearly a year and a half, when one day I saw several persons coming up to the house, by the mill-path,—the path down which I had looked so earnestly, in the earlier months of my exile, waiting for my mother. But now I had ceased to hope that anybody loved me ; and so I told Dame Coffin of the rare sight.

“Look,” said I, “there are people coming ! Who are they ?”

She glanced out of the window, then turning to me, said abruptly :

“I don’t know ; but it is somebody coming here. You a’n’t fit to be seen. Run away to the barn, and hide yourself.”

I was ragged and dirty, but I did not care for

that. There was something in the dame's manner, in her hurry and confusion, that made me suspicious of her, and it flashed on my mind that these persons were coming for me; that Dame Coffin knew it, and thus wished to get me out of the way, and not because of my tangled hair and ragged frock: and so I stood thinking and staring at her.

"Why don't you start, stupid?" said she, angrily, stamping her foot on the floor.

I waited not another bidding, but dashed out of the back-door, and then around, by a short cut, to the front-door, and met the party knocking there for admission.

A lady was there whom, in an instant, I knew, from her resemblance to my mother, to be the very Aunt Clare whose name was almost as familiar to me as that of my parent. I sprang forward, and, throwing my arms around her, looked up in her face, and screamed out, in my excitement—

"Aunt Clare! Aunt Clare!"

She appeared shocked, and not without reason, to be so unceremoniously claimed by a frantic little brown girl.

By this time the dame had opened the door, and was inviting the visitors to walk in.

Aunt Clare held me out at arm's length, and said severely to the dame :

"Is this the child of Madame De Thou?"

I shrieked out, "Oh, yes, yes! I am Emile! and I have wished—oh, ever so long!—that somebody who loved me would come and take me away from—from—this—"

At that instant I met the furious eyes of Dame Coffin, and the words froze in my throat. If I had been instantly bowstrung, I could not have been more silent.

Aunt Clare turned to one of her companions, and said, aside, "She screeches like a wild-bird when she speaks, and is a perfect fright, every way. But I shall take her with me for all that."

"Of course you will," said the gentleman. "She will do to label bottles and attend me in the laboratory. Such an impish-looking young one!"

He did not give me credit for my sharp ears. My aunt laughed, but I could not perceive why, and felt rather offended,—secretly thinking that he

looked just like the picture of Apollyon, in the Pilgrim's Progress—only, I must confess it, much handsomer.

There was a deal of grumbling and objection made by Dame Coffin to my being taken away. She declared my mother had given me to her until I should be eighteen years of age. But my aunt was firm, and carried me off with her, leaving the dame in evident discontent.

I believe that I slept nearly all the journey, for I can never recall any incidents, after the first few hours, when we travelled on horseback; and that, being a novel method of getting over the ground, kept me wakeful and interested. Although I had not a horse for myself, I was more comfortable; for the gentleman who looked like Apollyon carried me on the saddle before him, and protected me with the tenderest care, until I quite forgot my first impression. Yet I told him very frankly what I thought—and added, that now I believed him to be the best man in the world, except my father. “But,” said I, “I do not know your name.”

“Dr. Gaston Wilberforce, at your service, Miss

De Thou," he laughingly replied. But you may call me Gaston."

"Why?" said I.

"Oh, they all call me so at home, where you are going."

"Then I shall not," I said.

"What will you call me, little Brownie?" said he.

"Dr. Gaston. I like that name best; but I like to call you Doctor most of all, because it seems to me grand-sounding, and as though you must know a great deal."

"So, if I don't happen to come up to your ideal, little Brownie, I suppose you will cross me out of your books?"

"My name is Emile. It is a better name than 'little Brownie.' I don't know just what you mean; but I ha'n't a book in the world of my own, though I did have books once that my father gave me. Do you know my father?" said I, a sudden hope inspiring me that perhaps I might meet him soon.

"No, Emile, I have never seen your father."

"Let me ask Aunt Clare where my father is—and if I shall see him again."

"No," said my companion. "Do you remember that you promised to be his *little philosopher*?"

"Yes. How did you know that if you did not know him?" asked I, eagerly.

"It was written in a letter to Aunt Clare; and I thought it was a great promise for a little girl to make. Now I will see if you can keep it. You must not speak of your father to any one at present. He is very sick here," and he touched his forehead as he spoke. "He is sent to an asylum—a place where people are put to be cured—to be got well, if possible; and it would make him worse to see his little daughter. So you see, Emile, if he gets well Aunt Clare will tell you. But she does not like to talk about it, and you may talk to me when you wish to speak to any one of your father."

"Is—my—father crazy because my mother is dead?" I could hardly inquire, for the tears were stifling me.

"They say so, Emile."

"And can I never, never see him any more? Oh, I am sure I could comfort him, I love him so dearly!"



"You will comfort him best by being a sensible, good girl, and his little philosopher, as you promised."

I felt very sorrowful. It was a strange grief for a child to meet—stranger than death. I mused on it a while in silence, but it tired me so much that I could not think any more, and fell asleep in the Doctor's arms.

The journey having been concluded, I became an inmate of my aunt's house, and thenceforth called it my home.





## CHAPTER V.

**A**UNT and Uncle Clare lived in a great old-fashioned farm-house in the pleasant town of Lealands. My uncle was a farmer; not a gentleman-farmer, though a gentleman and a farmer, but a man who left the print of his foot in every newly-turned furrow, and saw the work of his hand smiling at him from every clod "climbing up to a soul," in each blade of grass, and

"Wee modest crimson-tippet flower."

"Emile," said my aunt to me one day, when we had been at home about three months, "now we have got the brown off a little, I think you may go to school. You will there find companions of your own age, and enjoy yourself better for the change."

To school I went. It was a long lonely walk

thither, but I sang all the way the merriest songs, and mimicked the birds in their various notes, till they grew familiar, and would answer me back from their leafy coverts.

I was very soon queen-bee in the hive of busy students at school, and loved my companions warmly; and I am sure they loved me, if I may judge from the gentle acts of kindness which they so often bestowed on me.

Our teacher was careful and painstaking, and we throve finely, and "the committee" were very gracious on examination-day.

But the most delightful portion of my time was that spent with Dr. Gaston. His home was with my uncle, whose half-brother he was. Whenever the thought of my orphanhood came sadly over me, I could fly to him for comfort, or for some tidings of my poor father. That was the only point on which I dared be free with him.

A strange man to me then seemed Dr. Gaston Wilberforce—a man of awe. My aunt had given me the care of his apartments—to sweep, dust, and keep them in general order. The doctor had a

morbid antipathy to cleanliness, a chronic affection for dust and cobwebs.

"Emile," he said, "goes about with the wing of a good angel, and is careful not to displace anything ; handy, too, and the least objectionable person that can come into my rooms when I am away."

The Doctor was a practising physician, and a skilful one besides. I felt quite sure that nobody would ever die if he were sent for, and I was inclined to believe it possible that he might even raise one from the *dead*.

Within the laboratory I seldom ventured when the Doctor was out. Yet it was a room in which I loved to linger, for many curious things interested me. After all, it was not a thorough laboratory ; although, as I soon ascertained, the Doctor did try to find the "philosopher's stone," or at least to discover the ingredients of the far-famed elixir-vitæ. It was, rather, a museum of oddities. There were preserved monsters in glass vessels, and other crystals were filled with fluids of various colors ; bottles and vials of antique shape were shut up in cabinets having glass doors, which were carefully locked ;

outlandish jars and vases of rare workmanship, with singular devices graven on them, fearfully suggested to me the residences of "bottle-imps." In a dim corner of the room stood a dark wooden case, in which was a perfect human skeleton, glittering ghastly in the uncertain light, for the windows were narrow and heavily curtained. Just over this case a huge vampire-bat, hanging upon the wall, excited my especial wonder.

From the ceiling was suspended a curious bronze lamp, swinging from triple chains, in which were interlinked a succession of little silver hands, most delicately formed, clasping each other firmly, and holding at the corners the trine rim in which the lamp was set. It gave the only artificial light ever allowed in the apartment. The Doctor always trimmed it himself. The naphtha that fed it was ambrosial, and the heavily-scented air made me sleepy if I stayed in the room long when it was lighted.

There was, likewise, a small case of books, wonderfully old and dilapidated,—valuable, no doubt, from their great antiquity, as well as from the remarkable and to me unintelligible signs and charac-

ters which I thirsted to comprehend. I was able to ferret out some of their titles and contents, and my eyes opened very wide upon such authors as Arnoldus De Villa Nova and his rare work on the secret of Rejuvenescency, Ptolemy, Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, and other renowned cabalistic writers and magi of the East, who comprehended the forces of nature and argued learnedly on the virtues and powers of the planets, "the heavens being a book," according to Origen, "which God has written in hidden characters, but yet very clear all things that must happen to subordinate mortals." An occasional peep into a great black volume that treated on occult, Pythagorean, alchemical, and hermetic philosophies, enhanced much my interest in the Doctor's favorite studies, and one day, after he had left the room, I found the book open at this passage—

"Whosoever, therefore, by quiet and religious meditation, and by diet temperate and moderate according to nature, preserves his spirit pure, shall very much prepare himself, and by this means become, in a degree, divine and able to know all

things ;" and on the margin was written these lines from Lucretius :

"To Nature turn the concentrated force  
Of all thy soul ; into her secrets pry,  
And search the depths of dark futurity."

Then the furnace, black and grimed, the skillets, crucibles, retorts, and other apparatus of chemistry, aided to enchant me, and to impress me with the magnitude of the Doctor's erudition.

"Oh, mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities !"

He seemed to me to know them all. He was deified to me.

Gaston Wilberforce had spent many years abroad before entering on the duties of his profession ; and, perhaps, he was a wiser man after his foreign researches. He was, certainly, a rare student and an earnest seeker into the mysteries of nature.

I was one day about leaving his room after putting everything in order, when he called me back.

"Emile, I am going to test something in the labo-

ratory to-night, and want you to help fan the coals, and hold various articles for me while I am at work. But the compound may explode, and then you would be blown up! Are you afraid, little Brownie?"

I did not care for his now calling me "Little Brownie;" so I answered, "My life will be as safe as yours."

"Good!" said the Doctor; "and, to reward you, if we are not blown up to-night, I will renew your lessons in Latin to-morrow."

In the evening I repaired to his room, eager to do anything to oblige him.

"Now, little Brownie, draw that stool forward to the furnace, and blow the fire gently, while I prepare my simples."

I did as he bade me; and, as I sat busy, yet watching his every motion, I wondered why I never had thought to ask *him* to cure my father; and I abruptly put the question, "Why cannot *you* make my father well?"

"Not because I have not thought about it, Brownie," said he; "not because I have not visited



him, and ascertained, what I fear is the truth beyond a doubt, that his insanity is incurable."

"Have you seen my father? Does he suffer much? Is his body sick as is his mind?"

"The state of the bodily health is always dependent on the mental."

"What is insanity?" I asked, in a sudden fit of perplexity.

"Who can tell? We only know that the dual brain loses its harmony of connection; that one portion becomes excessively irritable and excited, while another is in a state of torpid repose; or the peculiar properties of mind show themselves outwardly in absurdities. Some argue, from appearances after death, that the cause is seated in the blood-vessels of the brain. But who can assert that their condition by that struggle is not so materially and instantaneously changed, that we cannot with certainty judge of their immediately preceding state? Science is at fault," continued he, as if talking to himself; "the deepest research finds no remedy or control for some diseases. Science! is it a name? Nay; medicine is more an art than a science. Can

that be called a science, which after ages of profound study and practice on the broadest principles, and by the most cultivated intellects, still leaves us in doubt of the end? The wisest and most erudite master in drugs and minerals is never sure of the results from their applications to the human system. It is all experimental from the cradle to the grave,—a baffling mystery.”

He ceased speaking, and we sat in silence,—the stern, dark man, who had been reasoning of nature’s mysterious methods and the inefficiency of art, and the young girl sorrowing for her stricken father.

The embers cast a ruddy glow here and there, and the shadows fell darkly through the room. But ghastliest of all was the skeleton in the ebony case, gleaming in the flickering light.





## CHAPTER VI.

**T**IME travels in divers paces with divers persons." Time led me indifferently along through two years in my new home at Lea-lands. I had many friends, but those I most cared for invariably loved me least.

What wonder if, as my nature had received so rude a shock, I possessed more demon than divinity? Though I did not mean to do anything wrong, I was constantly outraging somebody's feelings in some manner, and falling into disgrace from the very heights of self-approval. When I thought I was right, I was sure to be wrong; and when I tremblingly confessed myself in the wrong, I was perhaps commended for being for once in the right.

Awkward and shy, I hated strangers, and sometimes suffered torments from being obliged to meet them. At one time an inconsiderate and vol-

atile young person, who was visiting at my aunt's, had made my personal defects the theme of ridicule. My tawny skin, great eyes, and protuberant organs of causality, which she called "horns," seemed to make me lawful game for this nymph of

"Jest and youthful jollity,  
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,  
Nods and becks, and wreathéd smiles."

This experience was not calculated to cure me of my sensitiveness.

On a summer's day, on returning from school, hot and tired with the noonday walk, I thought I would go to my chamber and get cool and rested before going about my usual domestic duties. I had just reached it and laid my throbbing head on the pillow, when Aunt Clare came bustling into the room, and said, hurriedly, "Emile, you are wanted in the kitchen. We have guests, and it is so warm I cannot go down."

I arose with alacrity, for I dearly loved to do her bidding. We passed through the entry. Aunt Clare remarked—

"Your cousin Judith is here. She will pass some days with us."

"Where is she?" I asked, for I had heard her talked of and was eager to see her.

"She is in the next chamber just now," replied my aunt, at the same time gently opening the door. She stepped into the room ; but I was stayed at the threshold by the vision of the lovely girl. It was my cousin Judith. Wearied with the heat and fatigue of her journey, she had fallen asleep on the low couch on which she had thrown herself to rest. The room was deliciously cool and shady, and she looked beautiful lying there, with the rosy hue of health on her cheeks ; while the child Ella, the sweet pet of our house, who had crept up to the side of the couch, was sleeping there also. I knew what darling blue eyes the veined lids were hiding, but I could not guess at those of my stranger cousin.

Aunt Clare said—"Poor little things ! how tired they are, and how sweetly they are sleeping !" and she bent down and slightly kissed them both.

"Come, Emile, run down stairs, and help to get the dinner ready !"

The contrast was too strong : the tears gathered in my eyes ; so I turned from the chamber.

I, too, was weary, had walked a mile and a half from school, under a noonday sun, and had not been allowed a moment even to wash the dust from my face ; but nobody had said of me, " Poor thing ! how tired she is ! "

No one had been exactly unkind to me ; neither had any one seemed to consider my human weakness. I was glad to be useful to my aunt, at any rate ; and, if she had only kissed me, as she did my cousins, I would almost have gone down the crater of Etna to serve her.

I did not envy them the love which was their right, but I longed to be so loved.

I knew Aunt Clare had not any deep feeling for me, although she did everything for my comfort and well-being ; yet I felt, when she permitted me to kiss her cheek, which was a rare favor, that she endured rather than returned my caresses.

So, that which I needed most, I lacked and pined for—a mother's kiss, the tender pressure of a mother's hand, that I could have no more.

I met my cousin at dinner ; and, from the first moment I looked into her sad but serene gray eyes, I loved her dearly. There was a fascination in her glance that was quite irresistible. She was only a few years older than myself, and we became at once firm friends.

The brilliancy of her wit, and the grace of her manners, charmed me into unquestioning admiration.

Aunt Clare said that Judith had bewitched me, and Dr. Gaston called me "a little wild enthusiast;" but I shook my long curls at him (for they had grown again) and replied, saucily—

"You are just as much an enthusiast as I am."

"How so?" inquired the Doctor.

"You cannot bear to leave the house, even to visit your patients, unless you can take her along."

"What an assertion!" and he appealed to Judith, standing near.

"Now Brownie is vexed because she too cannot go."

"Brownie is not," said I; "she is vexed because

she can never have her cousin to herself, in consequence of Dr. Gaston's devotion to her."

"Are you quite sure that is the truth?"

"Yes; for only yesterday, when I had planned so pleasant a walk with her, you came, with your great black horse, curvetting and prancing; and I believe he is an enchanted horse, and you an enchanter."

"Ah, Emile betrays her study!" said the Doctor. "She has been reading forbidden books. Her talk smacks of Arabia."

"That is not all," I rejoined.

"Well, let's have the rest!"

"As you drove off with her, she looked like a queen of fairy-land; and I am not going to mince matters, but tell you just what *you* looked like."

"Oh, don't, Emile!" said the Doctor, holding up his hands deprecatingly. "I know you are going to say something terribly severe. My vanity will have to suffer."

"Just like the spirit of darkness, flying away with an angel of light. But I know that light is stronger than darkness; so I was sure you could not carry



her far, for all you nodded so satisfied a good-bye to me."

"And what did you do, then?" asked the Doctor.

"I! Oh, I went in, and studied my Latin—the last lesson you gave me."

"And that was—"

"The day before my cousin came," I answered mischievously.

"And I have not heard you recite it yet. It is too bad! Come, now, and let me see how perfect you are."

Judith had run away; but, as we entered the library, we found her there, and she and Dr. Gaston were soon deep in conversation on Plato's philosophy, and Latin and I were forgotten again. Then I crept away into the Doctor's room, and felt as though I should like to cry, but did not; and at length, when I heard them coming, I commenced to dust the chairs with all my might.

My cousin called me to come and sit by her. She put her arm around me, and placed my head upon her shoulder, and the Doctor said, "Poor little Brownie!" and they went on talking, and I knew by

their remarks that they had been speaking of my father, and I whispered to Judith that I could not stay.

Then I ran into the garden, and gathered a great bunch of white roses and half-blown buds for her, and a nosegay of pansies, the largest I could find in my own garden-bed, for the Doctor. And Judith said "Magnificent!" as I handed her the roses; and he said "Sweet!" to the pansies.

"You queer girl, shall I give you a kiss, as your cousin has done?"

Of course I was out of sight in an instant, and went singing down the garden-walk, to show them how quietly indifferent I felt. But there was a great tumult in my heart, and I could not comprehend the cause of it. I do not know now whether I was jealous of the Doctor for monopolizing my cousin, or of her for permitting him to do so.

But I knew that he was charmed with her; as who indeed was not? I saw the love-light flashing up into his eyes, when, in their earnest talk, she seemed to take on her the glowing eloquence of inspiration; and my girlish fancy was jostled from its

place in the *had been*, and gained a new footing on the heights of the prophetic *to be* ; and I built "castles in the air," but they all toppled down, and then I wept amid their ruins.

Cousin Judith, among other accomplishments, was singularly gifted as a reader. No matter what the subject might be, she gave it, by her infinite variety, the charm of a brilliant colloquial effort.

In the reading of Shakspeare's plays she particularly excelled. As her noble voice gave utterance to the sentiment, one would suppose, who heard without seeing her, that the persons of the drama were separately represented.

Every day she would make me read or recite to her passages from the great author, which was a source of the purest delight to me and of gratification to her.

And I said, "Oh, when I can read as well as you, I will read to everybody!"

She replied, "One day you will read a great deal better. Then you will remember your teacher."

"I shall never, never forget you, dear Judith!" I replied.



## CHAPTER VII.

**D**ELICIOUS month of June! It seems to me that every hour of all the days of that month are ineffaceably engraven on the tablets of my memory. Everything I saw, heard, or felt, after-circumstances caused to be repeated, like pictures of a separate life.

But even the June sunshine has its shadows; and during those thirty days were some of the most terrible rain-storms I remember ever to have witnessed.

One evening I shall least of all forget. The thunder boomed through the heavens; the arrowy lightnings pierced the heavy clouds with flash after flash, riving them asunder as they lay piled, lurid or murky by turns,—a fitting background for the awful scene which the eye beheld.

It seemed like the hour of doom. We all sat in silence, gazing out on the terrible sublimity ; fearing, at every blinding flash, that some bolt might reach us.

My beautiful cousin seemed strangely affected by the electricity in the air. In a state of great excitement, she whispered to me :

“Emile, dare you go with me to the hill yonder ? Do not tell any one, but come quickly !”

I gave her my hand, and we hurried out into the tempest.

The rain had not yet come on, but the wind raved through the trees, and the branches tossed madly, moaning to each other. The wind screamed back to them, as they swept on, forever on, in their wierd, wild flight.

I accompanied my cousin, without a word, to the hill at a short distance from the house.

Suddenly I heard the ringing of steel, as it struck the golden charms fastened by a chatelaine to her girdle.

In an instant it flashed on my sight, as she elevated in her left hand a short sword, which she had

taken from a corner in the library, where several old-fashioned heir-looms of that kind were kept. She had concealed it in the folds of her dress until this moment.

For an instant I was overawed by her temerity.

"Why do you do so, Judith?" I said, softly.

"To see if the lightning will strike it," she replied.

"But it might kill you, Cousin!"

"Might it?" was her brief reply.

I felt afraid to speak to her again,—almost afraid to look at her, she stood so pale and grand, her forehead gleaming as the electric flashes played around her, bursting from the dark depths above. A cool determination was in her eye, appalling in one so young and beautiful; her lips were a little compressed in her earnestness; her light dress floated on the wind.

Such was the majesty of her figure, with the sword clutched in her hand, that she looked like some goddess defying the spirit of the storm and braving death.

I could bear it no longer; but snatching the

weapon, with all my strength I plunged it to the hilt in the earth at our feet.

She was silent and passive. Putting my arm around her waist, and without speaking, we hurried into the house.

In a few minutes the rain was pouring in floods from the surcharged clouds, while my cousin sobbed hysterically in her own room.

After that evening, Judith seemed languid and indifferent, except when aroused by some call on her intellect, or some extraordinary impulse to physical exertion. She was more sad and thoughtful than before ; and, when we were wandering together in the woods, she would get out of the path—purposely, it seemed, to lose me ; and I would find her apparently sunk in painful revery, and answering my questions so strangely, that I could not help weeping, feeling so sad for her. Then seeing my eyes brimming over, she would clasp me in her arms and comfort me with loving words.





## CHAPTER VIII.

“Darest thou die ?

The sense of death is most in apprehension ;  
And the poor beetle, that we tread upon,  
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great  
As when a giant dies.”

**N**OW often have I recalled these words when remembering that one evening, as we were all sitting about the open windows, a large horned beetle came whizzing into the room, and as it flew past, almost touched Judith's cheek. She neither moved nor turned her head, but requested that the insect might be caught, as she wished it for dissection.

Dr. Gaston, rather amused at her desire, secured the humming monster ; and the next morning was fixed on for the anatomical search for the springs



of life through the delicate structure of the victim. We were desirous that the beetles should be dead before commencing the examination ; for I, emulous of my cousin's example, had also provided myself with one of these sharded flies.

Judith seemed to awaken from the apathy into which she had fallen for the last few days, and now entered into a lively discussion with the Doctor, relative to the pain attending different modes of death.

She said : " I wish to put this beetle out of existence by the easiest possible means, not to pain the creature more than need be."

It was at last decided that drowning would possibly be the most painless infliction. There stood, at the back of the house, a long tank or trough, hewn from an oaken log. It caught the drippings from the eaves, and was generally full of water. In this tank we proposed to put the beetles. Accordingly, we shook them in ; but the obstinate creatures would not sink. We held them under, but they would not remain immersed. So we left them there till morning, and retired to our several bedrooms.

The next day I went to the tank, full of glee, never thinking of the pain, but much of the sport, of our experiment, and found the insects on their backs. They had yielded at discretion ; but had not yet given up the ghost (that is, if beetles have ghosts ; and I don't know how we are to determine whether they have or not) ; for, after Judith had commenced her scrutiny, by amputating a leg, a wing, and some minor portions, each particular member started from its state of torpor, and we discovered, by the faint quivering, that every anatomized particle was yet possessed of life. Then we laid them carefully away, supposing they would eventually die.

That very day a letter summoned Judith to her city home. All were sorry to lose her gracious companionship ; but the command from her mother was imperative, and was to be obeyed.

“We will have one more long walk before I go, Emile,” said she.

We were alone together for the last time ; and, in my own free way, I told my cousin how sorry I felt that she must leave us. Said I :

“What happiness it must be to you to go to

your mother, your sister, and your brother! How pleasant it must be to have a sister; and more delightful still, to have a brother! How very dear you must be to them!"

"Emile," replied my cousin, "do you not know that those whom we call mother, sister, brother, are often nothing to us in essence? It is simply a material relation, with every thought and feeling widely at variance; and it is more painful to acknowledge this than it would be to live in utter loneliness. To be obliged to hold hourly intercourse with, and be under constant obligation to, uncongenial persons, is more terrible than orphanage or destitution. But you have never known this, and I ought not to open your eyes to such a possibility."

"Then you are not glad that you are going home?" I said inquiringly.

"No. Perhaps it is ungrateful in me to say so, for my mother has spared no expense for my education, but she lavishes not her love, along with her care, for my mental cultivation. I would rather be her waiting-maid, and be beloved, than accept the care that gold can buy, and be a pauper in affec-

tion. Home would be pleasanter if I never thought anything beyond the milk-and-water sentiment which occupies most of the individuals with whom I come in contact when I am at home."

"I see how that may be," I replied. "One cannot help the thoughts, sometimes, which the little voice whispers are not wrong. I will tell you what is the trouble with you and me. Neither of us is religious ; for you know we both ask questions about God and the Bible, which persons who are called Christians would not do : they say it is doubting the Infinite ; and old Abby Kinsman told me it was just as much sin for me to question, as I did, as it was for Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which she says means, spiritually, self-wisdom, or the desire to know that which none but our Father in heaven can know. Perhaps, after all, dear cousin, the things which you desire might not be good for you ; for I heard you telling Dr. Gaston how you longed to understand the mysteries of the future, and to experience what almost every one shrinks from with dread, 'the change from life to death.'"

“No, not from life to death, but from death to life! for I am dead here, useless and dead. I am unhappy. There is no one in the whole world I love well enough to make me wish to stay.” And she went on, as if unconscious of my presence, though every word was like fire in my ears:

“This desire grows stronger and stronger; the spirit wrestles with the flesh in its vague yearnings to attain to the presence of the Great Unknown.

“But if, after all, it should not be,—if, when the veil be lifted, there should be only darkness beyond,—there is no return. The shivering soul, hounded on by the recreant will, for its penance may wander through a wilderness of worlds, and find no home, no God!”

She ceased speaking, and the silence was uninterrupted, for I could not fully understand her meaning, and felt grieved that she seemed so hopeless.

Our walk—our last walk—was taken, and we were in the house.

My cousin was as cheerful as though she had never known a sad thought in her life.

The hour came for her departure. She chatted

gayly with Dr. Gaston, while little Ella besieged her for a last game of romps, and the Doctor was promising himself the pleasure of visiting her the next week in the city. He looked very lonesome as he drove off to make his daily calls.

In a little while she too was gone. Aunt and Uncle Clare accompanied her a few miles on her route, to the house of a friend, where she would pass the night.

I watched the carriage out of sight, and listened till the last clatter of the wheels was drowned in the distance; and then I sat down alone in the woodbine porch to think. I built a fairy world; and when it was nearly finished, I fancied something wrong in the foundation, and tore it down again. Then I was attracted by the lazy hum of a droning bee, and I cried out:

“My fine fellow, when you go back to the hive without the honey on your thighs, the busy workers will drive you out with a stinging reproach. Better be gathering sweets from the clover-tops yonder.”

Then there was a sharper sound—a buzz, with a long low wail at its close. A huge spider had

meshed in its artful web a simple harmless fly, and I thought I would tear down the web, kill the spider, and rescue the captive. But stop; the spider wants the fly for his supper! and what good would it do to save this one, when there are plenty more ready to do the same thing? The fly's life would be saved and the spider's taken. Well, after all, what right have I to pull his house down, and take his life, when he is only getting his supper in a legitimate way? The fly does the same; and so does man trap, torture, and kill, to supply his daily wants. I shall not interfere simply because I am able to do it.

So I left the fly to his fate, and took pride in my hardheartedness. But I thought and decided that I would never again eat anything which had suffered the pangs of death, and to this determination I adhered.

A little after sunset my aunt and uncle returned. They talked of Judith. Aunt said:

"She seemed really homesick. I had a great mind to bring her back again; but she called herself foolish and weak, and tried to be cheerful."

Then my aunt told me how Judith had stood beside her, and, pushing her hair back from her forehead, gazed long and wistfully on her face, saying :

“I wish to remember exactly how you look, for sometimes I forget;” and then kissed her over and over again, with great tenderness.

My uncle said, in his plain matter-of-fact way, that he thought the girl was half crazy.

“No,” replied my aunt, “it is her way. She is always very sorrowful at parting from me. She has been with me so much during her childhood, that she says I seem nearer to her than almost any one. She has a very peculiar temperament, and they never seem to understand her. I look forward to her marriage with some suitable person, as the happiest thing for her, although she says her mind is fixed on this point—that she will never marry.”

“I think,” said my uncle, “that she has studied too intensely, and has read too much desultory matter, for a perfectly healthful and mental action. She is beautiful, amiable, and accomplished. But I am sorry to see the turn her mind is taking, and her mother blind to the great danger.”



"Great danger!" said my aunt, startled by the earnestness of his manner.

"Danger of her falling into a morbid melancholy, which will embitter her life, and overshadow the fair promise of her truly superior intellect."

Here the conversation dropped, but I thought a great while of what my uncle had said, before I slept that night. At daybreak, next morning, the household were disturbed by the arrival of a man on horseback, not to call the Doctor,—which was a common occurrence,—but with a message for Uncle Clare, which was extremely unusual.

I heard the man speaking under his window, but could not catch the words. He rode off again, and the house seemed quiet until the accustomed hour of rising.

When I met Aunt Clare, I saw that she had been weeping.

"What has happened, Aunt?"

"Our darling Judith is dead;—found drowned, last night, in the lake near Mrs. Coleman's house."

It seemed to me that every hair of my head rose up in horror.

*Drowned !*

My first thought was of the poor beetles we had tried to drown ; and I almost believed it a retribution for that act. I ran to the drawer where we had placed them. My horror was increased to find them still alive. The imagined cruelty seemed tenfold, now that I must bear it alone. I fled to the garden, and, with shaking hands, trowelled a hollow space, and, with shuddering haste, I laid the cold crawling remnants of insect life in earth, carefully heaping the ground above them. There seemed, to my excited imagination, a mystical relation between them and my dear dead Judith ; for I knew not then that she had herself withdrawn the curtain folded around the invisible future. Subsequently I learned the fact from the village crone, and almost fainted as I listened to the heartless speculations as to the cause of her wild, rebellious act. Of course a shadowy suspicion fell upon her,—the blighting insinuation which the censorious whisper to mock our charity,—and, in its poisoning breath, the name of virtue, withering, dies.

She sleeps in the quiet burying-ground at Lea-

lands, at the foot of the hill; the purple waters of the smooth lake—surrounded by picturesque foliage, gleaming like an amethyst bedded in emerald, calm and unruffled, as though no human heart had ever breathed its last sigh there—burying an untold secret, an unwhispered wrong, known only to her God; and “His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways.”

Dr. Gaston never forgot our poor cousin. He was cheerful as usual, but, in his hours of seclusion, he pored more intently over the chemical studies which she had for a time weaned him from. He seemed to forget everything in his dreams of the *Elixir Vitæ*, and the *Aurum Potabile*. His dream of love was ended, and he became once more the patient, ardent devotee of science.





## CHAPTER IX.

**S**UCH was my girlhood. Something too much of sorrow had flecked the sunshine, tinging my merriest thoughts with sadness, and it was said that my small dark face had the stamp of maturity far beyond my years. But the brown tints were disappearing from the surface; and I was getting tall, too; and Dr. Gaston said that I was growing so fast, and becoming so pale, there was no longer any point in calling me "little Brownie," and he must find some other pet name for me.

Some change in my uncle's business affairs caused him to resign the care of his farm to other hands, and to remove to a manufacturing city, some thirty miles distant from Lealands. Accordingly, preparations were set on foot for this change from country to town life.

I had never lived in a large town, and yet I had some very pleasant anticipations concerning it.

The bustle of removal was over, and we were comfortably located in a more elegant, but not a more spacious house.

Now came new relations, new duties, and new recognitions of old habits of thought and feeling.

I missed my friend, Dr. Gaston. He remained in his own place, and I sometimes felt lost without him, but something I had never before thought of occurred to me at this point. This was, that I might be a burden to my uncle, an increase of care to my aunt, and a useless member of a household where I had no real claim.

This idea grew, in the silence of my breast, until every thought was swallowed in the one feeling that I must make some special exertion for my own support.

“What ails the girl?” said my uncle.

I sat in an adjoining room, and could not avoid overhearing the conversation that followed.

“I never come into the house, but I find her crouched in some corner, with her elbows on her

knees, and her face thrust into her hands,—a perfect picture of misery. What has gone wrong with her?”

“I cannot comprehend what is the matter with her,” said my aunt; “and I am really puzzled to know what to do. Her nervous system seems to be out of order. I think she is getting morbid over her father’s condition. But, aside from that, she is really the strangest child I ever came across. She does not seem sick, but is moody, and freaky, and almost sulky. I think it the most difficult thing in the world to manage a young person of her temperament.”

So that was the valuation to which my honest inward struggle had brought me!

“Oh,” I thought, “if they only knew!”

“Perhaps,” said my uncle, “it would be well to send her away for a while—at least during the summer months.”

“I have been thinking about that,” replied my aunt.

I was not surprised when Aunt Clare proposed to me that I should go and pass a few months with a

relative of ours, residing in a quiet country village, about twenty miles distant from the city. I was passive, for I cared very little where I went, if I could not go back to Lealands, which was considered inexpedient.

A kind letter was written to Mrs. Leighton, to whom I was to make myself generally useful. That pleased me, for I thought, "Now I am sure I can do work enough at least to pay for my daily bread." I knew that a willing hand would find acceptance in a farm-house, where there was labor to be performed. Mrs. Leighton seemed to think, when she first saw me, that my assistance would not be worth mentioning; but I soon convinced her to the contrary.

The household affairs were conducted on a plan of the most scrupulous economy. The farm-house was small,—two rooms and a "buttery" on the first floor, and comfortable sleeping-rooms above them. The lower rooms were uncarpeted, the kitchen and buttery unpainted, and all of the wood-work was kept white as snow by repeated scrubblings with soap and sand;—rather a severe labor; but it was

recompensed by the gratification that its results gave to Mrs. Leighton.

I went often with the haymakers into the fields to spread swathes, to open winrows, to rake, and to do such light work as was expected at my hands. The hours of sunrise and of sunset found me milking the cows, and bearing to the dairy-room the foaming pails.

I became a binder of sheaves, a feeder of poultry, milkmaid, dairymaid—in short, maid-of-all-work on the farm.

I was what the country-folks termed a “smart girl;” and the “heaps of work” turned off my hands would have been a marvel to the gay belles of fashion, who get “fatigued to death” by doing nothing.

In all this earnest toil I learned useful lessons for the future. Besides, my health of mind was perfectly re-established. I sang and danced with the merry village lads and lasses, as glad and happy as they.

Mrs. Leighton was a kind-hearted woman, and well-disposed toward me; but she was not nice in



her own feelings, and had no innate perception of delicacy of sentiment, no regard for any peculiarity of organization.

Unfortunately, at last we fell out. I did not, to the letter, obey an injunction of hers, and she being in an irritable mood, her anger aroused, reprimanded me with undue severity. My pride kindled, as the sharp words struck my sensitive feelings with a hasty shock. I answered back—"I am not your slave!"

The reply came testily—"You are altogether too free of speech for one so dependent as yourself on the charity of friends for every mouthful of food you put between your lips."

There was an energy in her words that was almost petrifying. I replied :

"If you consider me a dependent on your charity, I had better go."

"The sooner you go the better," was the curt and heedless retort.

"Then it shall be so! I will go!" said I, more in sorrow than in anger.

I had eaten of her bread and drunken of her cup ;

but I felt that I had in some sort rendered an equivalent by the labor which I had so faithfully performed. She had been kind to me till now that she had flung my helpless, friendless state in my teeth, as though I were to blame for the circumstances of my life.

And we must part in anger. I looked back, as I left the chamber, hoping for a word or glance of relenting, that I might ask forgiveness for my hasty words; but in vain.

She had said, "*The sooner you go the better.*" I was cut to the quick. I decided on immediate departure. I scarcely knew by what means; but my impulsive spirit was apt in suggestion. I went about my usual duties for the evening with a swelling heart, and then made the scanty preparations for my journey. One gentle word could have turned me from my purpose. But no such word was spoken, though I lingered, hoping, even to the last, that it might be.

I was not old enough to comprehend all the danger incurred by the step I was about to take; for I had determined to go on foot, since I possessed

no other means. I never was provident of money, and had not sixpence then at my command.

I said: "I will go back to the town, but not to my aunt; no, not to her! Am I not fourteen years of age, strong and able as many who work in the manufactories?"

Thus I argued to myself, it is but right to show them that I need not be a miserable dependant, eating the bread of charity; and I proudly felt the power within myself of pioneering my own way through all future difficulties.

I decided to depart that very night, believing that I should be less liable to observation and pursuit. And it seemed, when I caught Mrs. Leighton's unforgiving, forbidding expression, that I would rather starve than remain another hour under her roof.

It was scarcely twilight when I was ready for my journey, but I resolved to leave a message, which I thought Mrs. Leighton would understand. So, writing on a slip of paper, I pinned it to the frame of the little looking-glass: "You may do what you see fit with my clothing, for I shall never need it."

Except the dress I had on, I took nothing with me except a small box of precious papers, letters, and various memorials of my young mates.

I had selected from my slender wardrobe the meanest gown, and certainly looked more like a beggar than a young lady.

It was a delicious summer starlight night. I did not well know the way; but there were the spectral guide-posts at the corners where the roads crossed each other. I was obliged to fix my eyes on the black-lettered face several moments ere I could discover the different points; and I went on, and on, through the dim night, unheeding the body's weariness, regardless of the terrors of the highway, though my heart did beat a little quicker as I found myself suddenly in the midst of a flock of sheep. The soft meek creatures were as much alarmed as I. We were mutually glad to part company. The dogs barked furiously at me as I passed. I thought they would arouse the inmates of the dwellings, and they, perhaps, would hunt me down; and away with winged feet like a frightened doe I fled. I was actually guilty of running toll. The "man at the

turnpike bar" never awoke to open for me, so I went under it.

Now for several miles my road lay through a dense wood of tall dark pines, whose intermingling branches excluded every ray of light, forming an archway worthy to be the avenue to Hadean Shades. Some such thought oppressed me. The mysterious sounds from the woods echoed in my ears like the fabulous words in the story. Every stick and stone sent forth a voice of bitterness toward me. I had a vague expectation that the gnomes of the rocks would lay violent hands on me, and drag me away to their dark lonesome caves. There was no walking then. I actually bounded over the ground. The drops of fear rolled down my face ; the breath came suffocatingly ; and, just as I reached the outskirts of the wood, stumbling across a gnarled root in the path, I felt, and remembered no more until I was aroused by the noise of a carriage near me.

It seems to me now that there might have passed either an age or an instant since my last thought. It was almost a miracle that the wheels had not gone across my body.

Startled into life by this new danger, I once more drew myself together for a renewal of my journey. At first I went but slowly: I was exhausted, mentally and physically. The road now lay through a swamp. The heavy vapors settled oppressively around me, while the croak of a solitary bullfrog came up hoarsely through the fog; the "will-of-the-wisp" flashed, flickered, and danced on every side, until bewilderment took the place of my former fear, and I fancied the huge white columns of misty exhalations flying to meet me were real forms of embodied light, that were coming to support my wavering feebleness. I lifted myself to meet them, but they were only as shadows, and flitted away, leaving me, with outstretched arms, still to grope amid the gloom. Oh, how I mutely wished for some tangible form of life to take my trembling hands and lead me onward!

A clock from some far-off steeple struck eleven. It started me. I knew that a good part of my journey was yet to be accomplished, though I felt completely exhausted. So I trudged painfully along for the next hour, and suddenly was near an isolated

human habitation. I felt faint, and thought I was dying.

At this moment the clock pealed out the twelfth hour. There was a supernatural hush pervading all nature, above and around me. My very heart stood still. The child-nature triumphed. I was afraid in the deep midnight. I felt that I must behold a human face, or die. I crept to the door of the solitary house; and then the question stole into my mind, "What right have I to waken people from their sleep? Will they not spurn me from the door as a thing that is troublesome and unworthy of their care? Well, after all, I can but die?"

I knocked falteringly. No answer. Again! Not a sound.

Once more, with the energy of despair, I struck my knuckles on the panel.

There was a step, and a voice within asked:

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"Who am I, and what do I want?" I was as much at a loss for an answer to myself as to the questioner within.

"What do you want?" repeated the voice.

"I am dying for rest,—famishing for a draught of water!" I cried.

My own voice frightened me. It was changed. The light-hearted girlish tone was gone, and the pathos of the deep-natured woman had taken its place.

The door was unbarred and slowly opened. An old man, his head white with age,—which was in itself enough to inspire me with reverence and trust,—stooped to raise me ; for, in my weakness, I had fallen upon the threshold.

He lifted me tenderly, and bore me in. Bidding his old wife bring a light, and holding it close to my face, he exclaimed :

"Poor child ! how came you to be a wanderer in the night ?"

The floodgates of feeling were loosed, and I wept, moaned, and sobbed with perfect abandonment.

The old people looked on with astonishment, but set about ministering to my comfort. Presently my passionate grief was exhausted, and I grew composed. When I could speak, I poured out the



whole story of my wrongs and sufferings, both real and imaginary.

The good people listened, pitied and soothed me ; and then they saw me comfortably in bed. The wife, as she bade me " Good-night," laid her hand in silent blessing on my head with all a mother's tenderness.

On the morrow I awoke somewhat refreshed, and ascertained, from the good old man, that I was seven miles from my place of destination. I had gone over twelve miles of my journey during the preceding night.

Without regard to the earnest appeal that I would stop with them until rested, I bade " Good-bye " to my generous entertainers, and walked on.

It was high noon as I entered the busy manufacturing town. With faltering feet and tearful eyes I passed the homes of some persons whom I loved,—of kind and gentle friends, who would gladly have taken me to their hearts, and shielded me from every trial. With a determined spirit, I pressed steadily forward, hastening to put my design into execution.

I knew that in the great factories,—the many-

windowed workshops of the million,—young girls not larger than myself were employed. I knew that my high-blooded relatives would spurn at my course, and consider me possessed of a spirit of servile meanness in harboring such a purpose, but I had no pride of blood or birth to deter me; for, even as a child, I was thoroughly democratic, and rather chose for my associates those upon whom my prouder companions looked down with scorn.

I felt that it would be my greatest pride to be able to relieve my mind from the depressing sense of dependence on my kindred, from which I had suffered.

Although an entire stranger to the proceedings necessary in order to obtain work, yet I felt certain of finding out the way by perseverance.

It was now the half-hour past noon, and thousands were thronging from the mill-yards, at the ringing of the dinner-bells swinging on the roofs of the factories.

I timidly joined a group hurrying by, and passed in with them to one of the tidily-kept boarding-houses.

The mistress of the house soon discovered me, as I stood trembling in the hall. She very gently asked my business. I confessed, through tears and sobs (for I could never master my weakness that way), that I had run away from the persons with whom my friends had placed me; that I did not wish to return to them; and begged her to assist me in obtaining employment.

She seemed touched by the brief recital, gratified by the confidence reposed in her, and kindly offered me a temporary home, saying that after dinner she would see what could be done for me.

I had no appetite for the meal. Although I sat down with others at the table, I could only swallow my tears instead of the food.

In less than two hours after, I was established as an inmate of the family. My place was engaged in a factory, in the weaving-room, where the clicking shuttle flies, the bands and cylinders whir and whir, and the noise of machinery booms in a deafening stunning roar through all the long days.

I was to receive a sufficient remuneration to defray all necessary expenses, and, after a little while,

would get something to lay by each week. I felt my spirits expand with the prospect of success in my first attempt.

"You must send for your trunk," said my kind protectress. "You will want your clothes immediately."

I then said :

"I do not wish the persons with whom I have left my clothing to know where I am."

"That will make no difference, of course," said she. "They will be sure to find you out at some time ; and when they learn that you are employed and in good hands, they will leave you alone."

"But," I replied, "it will hurt their pride to have me here."

"It should have been their pride to dispose of a girl like you so that you would not have been left to do anything that could hurt it," she answered.

I was in an intense state of excitability from excess of action, and could not rest. There was a dear friend of Aunt Clare's, who was likewise fond of me, residing a mile or so out of town, whom I longed to

see. I told my boarding-mistress I must go to her, but would return before evening. She tried hard to dissuade me, but, with my usual impetuosity, I overcame all obstacles, and, footsore and fatigued, but nothing daunted, trudged off in one of her dresses.

If I had not previously marked out the course to be pursued in the emergency of the case, I could not have gone to her; for the slightest appearance of seeking assistance from a friend, under the circumstances, would have been revolting to my nature, besides compromising my newly-acquired independence. I yearned for kindred sympathy. I longed to show my purpose and its near accomplishment to one who could appreciate the motive, and, perhaps, commend the act.

My generous protectress had done all she could for me, and I felt unbounded gratitude towards her. That was an exterior matter. I could not take her into my soul, and show its needs to her. Her bread and bounty could not feed the spirit of the inner sanctuary with the living manna of love, as one who knew my whole nature could do.

Another idea possessed me. If I did not fly to

tell that friend the story, she might hear it from less partial lips, and perhaps not understand the motive. I felt that I had acted rightly, although conscience said "too impulsively;" and I desired her to feel my integrity, while I should truthfully relate the facts.

How weary was the dusty way, that afternoon! but, like the traveller in the desert, who sees afar the palm-signal, waving its cooling green to lure him onward to the small sweet fountain, with its gurgling laugh in the welcome shade, I toiled on. I reached the house, and, unannounced, stood before the astonished woman. She regarded me in utter amazement; and I could not marvel, when she told me that she looked on me as one risen from the dead.

The feet of those who had come to announce the supposed fact departed from the threshold of one door while I entered by the other. A few moments sufficed for explanation of this, to me, new and startling feature of the case.

"They did not miss you until this morning, Emile," said my friend. "Then, the written message, which

you left with reference to your clothing, was taken as a token that you meant yourself harm. In short, they believed you had committed suicide."

Such a thought had never entered my head. There had been a great alarm, as I afterward learned. The whole village was thrown into commotion. Young and old were literally scouring the country, in all directions, searching for my unfortunate remains. Ditches were dragged, and old wells, which had long ago fallen into disuse, were peered into with eager eyes, in expectation to behold my pale dead face amid the rubbish at the bottom.

In short, it was very evident that they had not the slightest idea of the fastidiousness of my taste with reference to my place of repose for the long sleep. It was not the only time that my idiosyncrasies have been mistaken for madness or folly.

I felt really chagrined to have acquired so suddenly such an unenviable notoriety among my village peers, when my only aim had been to throw off the shackles that a false position had imposed on me.

My friend soothed and petted me, and tried to exact a promise that I would stay at least that night with her ; but the bird was fledged, and proud to use its wings. More than all, I had expressly stated to the mistress of the boarding-house that I should return before night, and my word must not be forfeited. So, in spite of all remonstrances, I retrod the way to my labor-home that was to be. I half suspected some mischief brewing against my new-fledged endeavor, from my friend's over-anxiety to detain me, and was right in my suspicions, for that very night, in the first hour of the deep sleep into which my weariness had plunged me, I was taken in my uncle's arms,—I was but a slender armful,—consigned to a carriage, driven carefully to his house, and placed in bed without awaking ; and all that night my unconscious head pressed the pillow on which it had, through so many years, been visited by changeful dreams.

I could scarcely believe my eyes, when, in the morning, I awoke in my own little room in my aunt's home. There was my beautiful aunt, with her fresh smiling lips bent close to mine, shedding



from her dear eyes down into my soul that warmth of affection I had so long longed for from her. It was mine at last. I felt it—knew it—and no earthly thing can ever again yield me the peaceful satisfaction and calm deliciousness of that unspoken, but heartfelt joy.

I thought I had been dreaming; but, as I awoke more fully to the pain of my blistered feet, I was rendered thoroughly conscious that the experience of the last two days, or nights, was a reality.

“Aunt, how came I here? I was to go to work in the noisy mill to-day. Is it right not to go when I have promised?”

My aunt just laid her soft hand upon my forehead, silencing me with tenderness—the holy maternal tenderness which she knew so well how to give. She was most judicious, just at that critical moment of my life. A single harsh word, or one unkind look, then, would have steeled me into wilfulness forever; and even she, who had so much influence, could not have saved me from the hungry ocean of the outer life. But she did save me with love; and when she spoke, her voice, so flute-like in its pure

tones, subdued me into a yielding submission to anything from her. She said : " You must not talk, Emile ! Everything is as it should be now ; and you will never leave us again."

I felt composed, and sweetly happy ; for I knew that we understood each other at last. That was enough for me.

My uncle forgave me less readily. He considered me a wayward, naughty girl ; and I believe he thought it would do me good to lock me up for a while every day, to cure me of my " wild fancies," as he called them.

My aunt plead for me earnestly ; so at length he came to realize that my innate love of independence was neither a wrong nor a dangerous attribute to indulge. After that, there was a sphere of action assigned me in the household. A certain share of the arrangements of my aunt's affairs was given to my sole charge, and a liberal allowance for my wants set apart. I felt that I could not remain with them in freedom on any other conditions. Thus I secured emancipation from the galling thralldom which had before oppressed me,



## CHAPTER X.

**T**WO years went by, while nothing of note occurred, except that I took to scribbling poetry, which was, and properly, laughed at by my aunt; for to her and one other person only did I dare show my treasured productions.

That other was my teacher. She never laughed at me, but solemnly bade me cultivate the gift.

I had little time for sentiment, or I might have been spoiled by her injudicious encouragement.

I was always dreaming and wishing for my father. I was told that he had been removed from the asylum, his case being considered hopeless. Once my aunt had spoken of him to me, when she saw how I clung to the wish to see him, and set about making arrangements for me to take the journey.

I was put on board a packet-ship, bound for the

northeast coast of Maine, for it was near our old residence that my father was living. The necessity for rigid economy, in a measure, directed the selection of his place of abode,—his whole means, since the loss of his property, consisting of a pension received from government for services rendered to his adopted country, as an officer in the army, during the war of 1812-15. Even that was a blessed bounty.

I was placed in charge of the captain of the packet. Favoring winds wafted us pleasantly on. We anchored in the bay ; and, disembarking, I stood again on the shore, where, seven years before, I bade farewell to my father. He was not there to welcome me. I had yet to travel some miles overland before I could meet him.

I turned sick and faint as I came in sight of the Headland Home, and saw how ruined was the dwelling. A portion of it had been destroyed by fire, set by some fanatical retainer of our family, who was heard to declare "if the 'squire (my father) could not live in his own house, no one else should," and in the dead watches of the night he attempted

the destruction, which time was sure to bring, of the homestead. Either the plot was ineffective, or it was discovered in time to avert its entire desolation, for only a small portion of the building bore the marks of the consuming element.

I believe, as there was no one living there at that time, the individual who thus braved martyrdom in his mistaken zeal for right and justice, escaped, or was permitted to go unpunished.

I looked long and lovingly up at the turret window where I had passed so many happy hours, and over the smooth greensward where I used to play at "goal." There stood the large-leaved, wide-branching sycamore, the tree whose tough branches supported the swing, and where I so often begged for one toss more before the "old cat died," as we children termed the last vibrations of the pendent cradle. All was changed. The tree looked stouter for its years, and I thought the grass was a shade less bright than memory had often painted it.

I wished to go into my mother's room, but the house was now occupied by strangers, and the prospect was uninviting.

Still, it was the spot where I was born. It was once my home; and my heart thrilled to the old, half-forgotten harmonies, for the everlasting murmur of the waves was again in my ear.

It was morning when we left the ship, and mid-afternoon when we arrived at our destination.

I saw not one familiar face, though I was known to many, who greeted me with cordial warmth. I knew it was for my parents' sake, and softly blessed them for the precious tribute.

It was deemed advisable to wait until the next day before visiting my father. I was wild with impatience, but so grateful for the kindness heaped on me, that I became patient as a child at prayer beside its mother's knees.

My kind entertainer, Mrs. Lester, who had known my father well from his youth, accompanied me on the visit.

We were driving through the centre of the thriving and populous town, when I observed a crowd of boys gathering about some object which could not be clearly discerned. As we drew nearer, I saw that it was a man, evidently in great wrath, gesticulating

and vociferating rapidly to the throng of mocking urchins.

A thought flashed painfully across my mind, as I fixed my eyes, half doubting, on the strange vision.

His garments were fantastically bedecked with sea-shells and mosses. In his hands he held a trident-shaped spear, and on his head was a crown of yellow sea-weed that gleamed palely in the sunlight. The children shouted, in discordant, heartless tones, "Hurrah for old Neptune, the god of the sea!" That long floating hair—that high, broad forehead—it must be—it can be no other.

"Emile, your father! How very sad for you, poor girl! We will turn back."

"No, no," I cried, as she gave the order to the driver to turn down a side street. "No; I must go to him now!"

"You cannot, my child. You cannot bear it here, and—"

But I did not heed her. I sprang from the carriage, and made my way among the rude assailants to my father's side. I saw nothing, heard

nothing but him. I drew near—nearer, and looked in his face.

He did not know me, but his eyes lost their wild expression when he saw my tears and beheld my supplicating attitude.

I could not speak. I could only stretch my arms imploringly towards him.

He said, in his mildest tones, "You are an angel, I think. But you weep. Do not weep!" And he took a tress of his long hair to wipe away my tears.

"My father!" I cried, "do you not know me—your child—your Emile?" and I flung myself on his neck, for I could not stand alone.

The crowd of boys and idle people felt a touch of pity, and drew aside. My father saw and knew Mrs. Lester, who had followed me to the spot.

"My good friend," said he, "I have found an angel!" and his arm clasped me nervously around; but I have no home for her. Yet, because she is on earth, and fair, and young—because she is weak, and trembles in my arms—because I have a daughter,"—his voice was husky,—“and because



she called me 'Father,' and named herself 'Emile,' I wish you to take her to your home, and let me go too!

"With all my heart," responded Mrs. Lester. "Here stands my carriage. Come!"

"Come, pretty one," said he, "and if you are my child, I am the happiest father living. If you be not—but who would dare deceive the poor old man, who has lost everything but his one child, and she so long an alien? Why did they keep you from me, if you are my child?"

"I am your child—your own, own child! I have longed, oh, so much, to see you! I have dreamed of you by night, and thought of you by day, and felt the lack of you a weariness too heavy to be borne.

"Will you not own me, Father? I am your child."

"Your words seem honest, and your tears seem true, but I have been so balked, so cheated by worldlings, sharpers, that I almost fear to trust the angel I have found. O pretty one! How raven-dark your smooth hair lies above your fair white

brow!" he added, fondly smoothing my head with both his hands.

"Am I not like my mother?" I timidly asked; for I felt sure that the strong ties of blood and nature were tugging at his heart, and he must know me.

He murmured to himself, "The voice is like hers, —strangely like the patient and lovely one. But she is dead—my child was lost to me—and I am all alone. Fair angel, did you meet my wife in heaven; and can you sing the songs she used to sing on earth?"

My fortitude returned with my earnest wish to make my father know me,—to find some page in memory's folded leaves whose characters should bring me anew to his benighted soul.

We were just at Mrs. Lester's door; and I said, half playfully, "Will you give me the crown you wear, if I will promise to sing you *the very* song she sang, and that you loved so much to hear?"

As we entered the house, he took it from his brow, and placed it in my hand, saying:

"Would you like to know, fair angel, why I wear it? It is partly for a victory won over myself;—but

that is a secret, no one knows it;—and partly to make me bear always in mind how I am crowned with evils, dark and dire! Men tell me I am erring here,” and he mournfully touched his forehead. “It is not so! It is they who are mad. I am perfectly sane. True, I have odd fancies sometimes—quite different from the others, you see; and then they call me mad, and the boys in the street insult the poor old man—But you are weeping again!” and again he tried to dry my tears with the tresses of his silvery hair.

Mrs. Lester sat watching us with mournful interest. I bethought me of the song he had desired so much to hear. I knew my voice was very like my mother’s in quality, and I recalled her style exactly, while I sang—

“Tell him I love him yet  
As in that joyous time;  
Tell him I ne’er forget,  
Though memory now be crime;  
Tell him, when sad moonlight  
Is over earth and sea,  
I dream of him by night—  
He must not dream of me!

“Tell him to go where fame  
Looks proudly on the brave;  
Tell him to win a name  
By deed on land and wave;—  
Green, green upon his brow  
The laurel-wreath shall be;  
Although the laurel now  
May not be shared by me.

“Tell him to smile again  
In pleasure’s dazzling throng,  
To wear another’s chain,  
To praise another’s song.  
Before the loveliest there  
I’d have him bend the knee,  
And breathe to her the prayer  
He used to breathe to me.

“And tell him day by day  
Life looks to me more dim;  
I falter when I pray,  
Although I pray for him:  
And bid him, when I die,  
Come to our favorite tree;  
I shall not hear him sigh—  
Then let him sigh for me!”

As first he listened, he gazed earnestly in my face; then, gradually, the lines of his visage re-

laxed, the eyelids quivered and fell; his head sunk on his breast, and two large round tears rolled down his withered cheeks. Then his hand tightened its grasp of mine; a shivering spasm passed over him, and, as I lingered on the last plaintive strain, he arose upon his feet, and, with one burst of hysterical joy, cried out—

“My daughter!—my own Emile!”

Such a moment of holy ecstasy is not often given to mortals, as that in which I felt that for a little time my father’s reason was as perfect as my own—that I was surely recognized, and that my existence was priceless to him.

How earnestly he lent himself to all my wishes! He wore no more the fantastic decorations in which I first found him; but he would sit for hours for me to pass my hands over his weary head. He said my fingers felt like little fans of ice, and that they soothed him deliciously. We walked together, and no rude rabble assailed us more. They would have been daring, indeed, who could stand before my flashing eyes when he was in danger. We had changed places; for,

if evil threatened him, the child protected the father.

For three months he was docile as a lamb to every desire of mine before it was half uttered; but I had miscalculated my strength. The incessant tax on my physical and the strain on my nervous system proved too much for me. I was taken seriously ill, and forced to keep my bed. Worse than all, I was denied the privilege of seeing him.

I heard him storming at the refusal; and, as the paroxysm increased, and his voice grew louder and fiercer, I could not endure it. He accused Mrs. Lester of having spirited me away to torment him.

Nerved with sudden energy, I arose, and, with only my white wrapper about me, went to him.

He did not notice me until I threw my arms around his neck. He was subdued in an instant.

I said, "Dear father, I am sick, but will be better in a few days. Be patient until then, and not distress Mrs. Lester; for, indeed, she is very kind to us!"

"Oh, my angel, how white you are!—as white as your mother when these eyes took their last look of her. I see—I see how it is. You will never be well if your old father comes raving after his darling. Yet it is so hard to lose you, dear, as soon as found! But I must wear the old crown yet. I thought it was laid aside forever. There; kiss me, pretty one, and I will go!" and he rushed from the house as wild as before.

I had one of my old-fashioned fits of rigid unconsciousness, and was carried, helpless, to my chamber.

As I grew better, I found that my desire to renew the care of my father must be abandoned; for he was again violent and unmanageable, except through the most careful and constant watching and discipline. I saw that it was best, and submitted to the iron hand.

Aunt Clare had written for me to return—expected me—nay, needed me, she said. As matters were, it could be no possible benefit for me to remain, and I prepared to obey her. It was late in the chilly autumn when I arrived at home, with one

weight removed, but another saddled to the load which was crushing my youth.

I have never to this day forgiven myself for leaving that shore while he lived ; for, if I had remained, the fate that overtook him might have been averted.

In the depths of that dreary mid-winter he stealthily escaped from his tedious confinement, and fled, no one knew whither. They sought him for several days without avail. At last they found him, frozen to death, in a lonely field, under the cold, keen starlight.

The tidings reached me in the midst of the gay world in which I lived. I was relieved at knowing that he had passed from human suffering to the clear spirit-world ; but I grieved over the sad loneliness of his final hour.

The mantle of womanhood was folded over my frozen heart before happy childhood had laughed its roses into bloom. A huge and gloomy hill of sorrow had shut me from the sunshine. Now the sunshine withered me as I stood in its full glare, and I missed the screen, half wondering what had befallen me.





## CHAPTER XI.

**A** DISTANT relative of Uncle Clare's, Miss Burton, was spending the winter with us; and we went frequently into society, and had much company at home. Miss Burton was fashionable, witty, gifted with splendid colloquial powers, and a blue. She gathered around her an intellectual and cultivated circle. This gave me an opportunity of seeing and hearing more of that peculiar class, the literati, than I could ever have done with only Aunt Clare as chaperon.

Miss Burton said I was a genius, and a prodigy, and took me under her wing as a "bird of her feather." In the society with which she most mingled she introduced me as her unfledged phoenix. I suppose it was because, one day, when I ventured to display to my aunt some verses, which I flattered

myself were a brilliant effort of genius, she peremptorily expressed her disapprobation of the whole thing, and advised me to abandon such nonsense.

In the passion of my mortified spirit, I made an *auto-da-fé* in the garden, and cast to the hungry flames the record of my girlish thoughts. Miss Burton begged for one little paper, which she called a gem ; but I disrespectfully snatched it from her, and threw it upon the blazing pyre, crying—

“So perish every vestige which may witness that I ever had a thought or a feeling beyond the circumscription of my daily duties !”

Miss Burton said it was done with the air of a tragedy-queen. Aunt Clare somewhat dryly remarked that ashes were very good to spread over the garden-beds in the spring ; and she doubted not that was the wisest use to which I could apply my accumulations of paper. When I heard that, I shut myself in my room, and wept long and bitterly. So my wounded pride was appeased. The next day I went about singing as happy as a homeless bird, and wore the yoke of authority as yokes are usually worn at first. I kept my vow from that time

for years. I made myself content to sit down "in the dark house of the body, cooking victuals and lighting fires"—to

"Sow the seed and reap the harvest with enduring toil,—  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat and wine and oil."





## CHAPTER XII.

**T**HERE was a gathering of the *élite* of the literary world at the residence of one of the fashionable ladies of "Our Circle," as a certain set of people called themselves. The Clare family were among the guests, and the Clare family included Miss Burton and myself.

The arts and sciences were liberally discussed, and many dainty little bits of fashionable common-places served to fill up the spaces where silence might creep in : for the most brilliant people cannot always command their powers ; and, sometimes, the dullest entertainment is where two or three great wits are brought into contact.

An animated conversation was going on between Miss Burton and G——, an author of some merit, in

his own opinion ; although his reputation was much more limited than he supposed. They were discussing the merits of a book,—somebody's autobiography just published.

"Sentimental trash!" said G——. "The 'Sorrows of Werter' bear no comparison to the sorrows of wailing lovers of the present day. I am sick of it. Any 'printed thing' that can be coaxed into giving utterance to this everlasting common groan, is teeming, overrunning with love-stories and 'tales of the affections.' It makes me weary of authorship.

"But, then," said Miss Burton, "you must make allowance for the age. It is a story-loving world ; and personal pronouns with broken hearts are as common as grasshoppers in June. I don't know what is to become of all the poor unfortunates with the citadel of life in such a shattered condition. Fancy pictures them wandering up and down droopingly ; and when the ebb and flow of feeling rages too mightily, threatening destruction, they may prop themselves on bolsters of sympathy, stuffed with down plucked from the winged Cupids. No won-

der that we are thus deluged with sentiment. If persons are impressed, of course they must express, as a natural consequence; and love and murder are the only legitimate offspring of such parentage."

"And as for language," exclaimed G——, "every superlative phrase in the English tongue is brought to bear to give body and force to the mania of romance-writing. Everybody has said everything. Originality is dead. Exclusiveness is thrust out of society; while conversation is knuckled and nudged under the ribs by Tom, Dick, and Harry."

Poor G—— was suffering from a fit of spleen that night. He had been cut up in an article, although not snuffed out by it as was poor Keats. The blood of the Bruces, which he boasted, tracing from the great Robert his proud lineage, flowed muddy and turbid through his vexed brain. He hated plebeians, and they were plentiful where he dwelt.

"There is too much of false sentiment, I allow," said Miss Burton, "groping in miserable plight through the earth. Some people delight in reproducing themselves. They think they have had

an experience, and long to give it to the world. Each strives to write his name above his neighbor's. Among the most prolific of these may be mentioned various mis-mated victims of connubial infelicity, who desire nothing so much as to tell their outrages gracefully to the curious world. Yet there is an unacknowledged philosophy in all this. It is the crude instinct of artistic cultivation struggling into life. Individual recognition is the first element of growth, of human expansion. From the first man down to the last, selfhood is the earliest perception. When the process of universal education shall be accomplished, and we shall know ourselves, then shall we truly know each other, and recognize those individual rights which each soul inherits. Not one seed of humanity can be lost from the great garner-house of God. The weeds may grow rank and poisonous: even they are useful, serving as compost for the arid earth. So the germ of pure life is nourished and perpetuated in its fruition. Let each soul do its devoir. It is not for man to accept or reject. Besides, you forget another

thing, or else you do not hear the mournful voices from dark lanes, close courts, and narrow alleys, where the children of genius are sometimes found. We write for bread. Cruel want and merciless circumstances have pursued us to the death. But for this light trash, which you deprecate so fiercely—that, being easily written, suits best the character of such as read it, and therefore serves a better purpose as food for the million than more solid matter could do—but for this, we should starve, or do worse; for we are women, and your social customs exclude us from many employments which ought to be open to us, and for which we should receive the same compensation as that awarded to our bearded or beardless brothers, who would boast that they support us! Continually do they jostle us from our slender foothold, taking the lion's share of the little our poor brains will yield. We do not seek fame, present or prospective. We want to earn our bread—not have it given to us, even as a charity or as the price of our smiles. We must do the work of to-day, not daring to think of to-morrow."



I was listening to Miss Burton, but watching a scene enacting just then not far from where we sat.

Standing in a window-recess, half concealed by graceful drapery, were two persons; one a fair woman—her companion a man past youth, but elegant in the prime of manhood. He had taken her hand in an idle, not a lover-like way. Her small, finely-shaped head was eloquent with expression, as she half turned from her companion, looking out into the murky night, so that the street-lamps lighted up her face while she was speaking.

“You see how it is. I am helpless, even with the mental wealth for which you give me credit. What is it worth, after all, if it does not avail for my support? I am losing faith in myself—am almost too sad for courage. Ah, well-a-day! Poverty and disappointment are most inconvenient and irksome attendants.”

“It is true; and public favor is as fitful as the wind, and often as devoid of reason,” said her companion. “But in this new plan you must succeed. Let us talk with Miss Burton and Mrs. Llewellyn, and get their views on the subject.”

In another quarter of the spacious drawing-room the lady in the window was discussed, or, rather, her book. Is she an unsuccessful author? It were better to have never been born! But she has not written a book; she has only compiled a volume of "Elegant Extracts," which leaves her somewhat answerable for the sentiments therein contained.

Several were expressing their opinions. Among others, Miss Simper, who is not exactly a member of "Our Circle," likes the book very much, but she thinks the extracts from Lamartine have an infidel tendency, and that they ought to have been omitted.

Miss Starch, who is the head and front of a fashionable school for young ladies, thinks the selections are not solid enough; has a great deal of sympathy for Mrs. Mordan; but she shakes her head doubtfully.

"I wish to know," said Miss Tremor, "who are her endorsers for admission to 'Our Circle.'"

"I am one," said Mrs. Llewellyn. "Will that do?"

"Oh, certainly," replied the croaking Miss Tremor. "I was not aware that she was your friend;" and she crept away to find more congenial companionship.

From such a clique of heartless critics the soul would fain escape into some region of tolerance. That could not be. Mrs. Mordan was fairly one of "Our Circle." The honorable members consider that a great gain *for her*; for they always stand by their own as long as they stand by themselves;—as if the very moment in which one needs the patronage of such a body most, were not that in which one is not strong enough to stand alone.

The music was hushed; the dance was done; the party was broken up. Mrs. Llewellyn invited Miss Burton and myself to breakfast the next morning, to meet Mrs. Mordan. Mrs. Llewellyn's breakfasts were choice affairs—delicious affairs, I might say. Such coffee, and such rolls! with fruit, flesh, fish, and fowl, to tempt the daintiest appetite. Then such attic salt for a relish! A little gossip too; for people, however refined, cannot live without some gossip.

Mrs. Llewellyn, always fragile and delicate in the morning, still presided with perfect lady-like grace at the breakfast table ; but she had a sad preference for rather stilted language, while Mr. Llewellyn quietly and with the slightest trace of sarcasm showed himself altogether superior to the censorious chatter that was threatening to annihilate the characters of many persons whom his judgment pronounced to be immaculate.

“Anna,” said Mrs. Llewellyn, addressing Mrs. Mordan, “you must remain with me all winter, and enjoy the refinements of cultivated society, that you may keep your ideal at that pitch which will enable you to cope with contemporaries, and, at the same time, to gratify the public mind. Excuse me for saying that you are queer and antediluvian in your notions. That last article of yours shows perfectly that you live too much out of the world.”

Circumstances had given Mrs. Mordan a home in the retirement of a country parsonage,—an excellent place to grow in, but a poor place for practice. As she lifted her eyes to reply, the tableau of the

breakfast-table, with its glittering appointments, reflected from an opposing mirror, held her for a moment in silence.

How changed from the glowing, artless scenes of her girlhood were the surroundings of this frigidly fashionable yet brilliant woman ! Mrs. Mordan half smiled at a contrast so forcibly presented by the unconscious plate-glass. Her own simple black dress looked rather shabby in contrast with that of Mrs. Llewellyn, who reigned the "queen of fashion," in an elegant and costly morning-robe. But Anna Mordan possessed the independence of strong good sense, and was not afraid to be singular, she said :

"May not excessive refinement weaken and enervate the intellect, causing one to become indifferent to the realities of life, and finally to attribute all value to form and appearance ? It seems to me there is too much shallow formality in your refined circles. Words magnify the significance of things till they seem greater than they are. All persons who write truthfully will magnetize their readers into toleration, if not into full concurrence with their opinions ; and, as every one will be taken at his or

her *real* value at some time or other, I am content to risk myself in the race with my competitors, and to abide the final issue."

The arrival of guests interrupted further conversation between the friends for the time.

Mrs. Llewellyn had attached to her establishment an obsequious female, whom I shall designate as Toady.

Toady assisted Mrs. Llewellyn in various ways, but her forte was in retailing the most piquant and exquisite morsels of scandal that ever gave zest to the feast of reason and the flow of soul. She had conceived an unjustifiable jealousy of Mrs. Mordan, that revealed itself in a thousand petty ways, which none but a close observer could detect. A skilful tactician was Toady; artful and insinuating, with a *naïve* manner, and a cunning that perfectly posed the auditor. It was a thousand times more contemptible than downright hypocrisy. She delighted in setting people by the ears; and, wherever there were signs of a domestic squabble, Toady was there, armed to the teeth.

She would open the gates of discord, and banish

peace, with most consummate skill. She was entirely unscrupulous, if any plan of her own could be furthered thereby; and yet many persons trusted her, at least in "Our Circle."

An affair had just transpired—a runaway match. A beautiful daughter of one of our aristocratic neighbors had eloped with and married a person of promising address and fair professions,—a reputed linguist, who gained access to "Our Circle" by means of a reputation for foreign culture, and thus managed to gather one of the fairest flowers in our select garden. In the hour of his triumph he was discovered to be only an adventurer,—a sad fact for the daughter's father, but worse still for the father's daughter.

This young girl was my most intimate friend. She had made me her confidant, under a solemn pledge of secrecy, which I dared not break, although trembling at her rashness. Toady knew she was lacerating my heart by every word she uttered, and yet forbore not to give a full and circumstantial account of the whole affair to Mrs. Mordan. Rumor is never at rest.

Toady warmed as a new theme engrossed her and more personality was involved. She was about to disclose a discovery of her own. The small eyes blinked and twinkled through the gleaming glasses (Toady had a defect in the eyes, and wore spectacles); the thin lips quivered and writhed, while every line and muscle of her cadaverous face emitted a malicious, phosphorescent light.

By employing some of her sly traits of character to aid in gratifying her curiosity or her malice, she had found out something which she considered perfectly awful.

Oh, if anybody is going out of the beaten track, Heaven preserve her from such an argus-eyed, merciless watcher! Better be detected in an act of sin by a thousand angels, than by one evil-minded woman.

Mrs. Mordan shivered from head to foot as she listened. An indefinite sense of fear thrilled her brave heart. Toady seemed to convey a warning in every motion of her strange, witch-looking, little, hard hands, as she recounted the affair to Mrs. Mordan;—and to the rest of the party it was not new,



though Toady's enthusiasm, like that of a Pythoness, made even a twice-told tale interesting.

A word of warning. Ladies, beware of interference with other ladies' beaux, whether married or single! There is precious little magnanimity in the sex when a lover is at stake. A woman might freely allow you the society of her husband, when, if you were intimate with her lover, or seemed to be so, she would slander you to the death,—moral death, I mean, far more to be dreaded than Azrael's gentle signal.

Pardon the insinuation that married ladies *do* sometimes have lovers. If they don't, nobody need get angry about it. If they do, the fact is plain; it is for them to abide the penalty.

Poor Alice Judson! How whispering tongues will poison truth! Her single defection from propriety was registered in Toady's book as *unpardonable*! The delicate susceptibilities of "Our Circle" were of course shocked. Decorum shrieked for redress. Alice was "voted out," without one dissenting voice.

Who dare refute the mandate of such a tribunal

of outraged men and women, who, in their high places, direct others to the lofty summit where virtue is enshrined in the coldness and majesty of marble?





## CHAPTER XIII.

**F**LADY flourished in a good position in the best society, and was playing skilfully to gain a husband. She possessed great advantages over many prettier women,—sagacious creature! Who so well as she knew how to humor weaknesses, and to make men self-satisfied, which is the surest flattery of mankind? Through the power so possessed by her, of making people feel comfortable, whether they were so or not (and it would really be a grand thing, if it were not a cheat)—through this sort of glamour, she completely controlled certain persons in “Our Circle.” They bowed before her like faithful subjects to the will of an imperious sovereign. A very distinguished philosopher, a man of profound erudition, was perfectly enthralled by her dexterous ministrings to his peculiar needs, and her adroit approval of his peculiar notions of religion

and morals. It was he who stood with Mrs. Mordan in the window-niche that night.

Nothing escaped Toady's eyes. She marked the dallying with the hand. In her heart she did not believe anything could be innocent. She treasured up that small amount of indiscretion in the bank of memory, to be disbursed with interest.

She did not know that they were friends of long ago; that the memory of one fair spirit, dear to both, now immortal, lost to those children of time—the sister of one, the beloved of the other—slept beneath a grassy mound in a shady nook in the churchyard by the parsonage, the home of Mrs. Mordan.

“Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.” One source of gossip could not last forever; and there were several new subjects of minor interest engrossing the gossip-loving persons who composed “Our Circle.”

It held within its limits many honorable members of society—wise men and brilliant women; many persons whom it might be considered an honor to know. We had logicians, historians, lawyers, poets,

and divines—each member remarkable for something, if it were only for superlative silliness.

There was our ardent, active Mrs. Dido, full of native vigor of thought and feeling, endowed with all the varied attributes of womanhood, together with a good degree of that higher force, so rare in women, which only the most affluent natures possess. Although a thoroughly literary woman, she had all the personal vanity supposed to belong more particularly to those who make no pretensions of affection for blue-stockings.

From the Grecian knot of glossy brown hair, which actually grew on the head that wore it, to the black satin slipper, cradling so lovingly the fairy foot; from the fine lace kerchief of “illusion,” gathered around the beautifully moulded throat and over the swelling snow of her elegant bust, tempting grace behind a cobweb-screen—(I am sadly afraid, ladies, you *mean* to be bewitching in displaying so freely Nature’s favors to you—better too little, than too much)—the very folds of the simple robe concealing, yet enhancing, the grace of the fair form; everything *point device*, bespoke a woman vain

enough to enjoy hearing that she looked very pretty, and vainer yet as an author of her most perishable fame.

The charming Dido had her faults. She could not keep a secret, and she was not sincere in more than half she said. Besides that, she was just as fond of gossip as anybody in "Our Circle." These, however, were none of them unpardonable sins; and fair Dido could command anything in the shape of a confessor and do penance to suit herself.

Literary ladies, beyond all others, do manage to get into the most decidedly charming quarrels. There is more pith to their sarcasms than to those of any other class, because they best know where the vulnerable points are.

Men are fierce in battle, but it takes women to be merciless to each other. No barbaric torture ever invented can match their scientific attacks. And all is done, too, with such sweet lips and amiable eyes—with such a show of disinterested friendship, and as though it really hurt the feelings to be obliged to speak what one hears and is forced to believe and tell of, or to belie one's conscience, until you

are perfectly bewildered by the exquisite duplicity!

In "Our Circle" there were many little disagreements, arising from the nature of things,—some proceeding from one cause, and some from another,—and the pretty creatures defamed each other, until it seemed almost impossible to guess who was right and who was wrong.

A most interesting quarrel at that time was raging in "Our Circle," between the fair Dido and a rival sister, of kindred art—the magnificent Inez.

It is supposed, for charity's sake, that Dido, whose imagination was particularly a vivid one, fell into a wicked day-dream, and it became so real to her that she told it as fact. There was great agitation and fluttering among the laces and feathers. Everybody was upon the *qui vive*. Men sneered; and the *bas blues* of the deepest dye shook their quill-pens in holy horror, and contemplated their slipshod shoes with pious amazement.

And what had Inez done? Heaven only knows what she had done; but rumor said she had attempted to do a savage deed—to give her hus-

band a dose of oxalic acid, which he discovered in season to decline; and that he had most ungraciously incarcerated the lady for a week's fasting in a cell in the city prison—for our town was now a city.

Dido said that the matter, which might have been tragical, ended rather farcically.

When Inez was summoned to court, no one appeared to substantiate the charge against her. Accordingly, she was discharged, and went off triumphantly, the report filling the ears of the members of "Our Circle" with mysterious vibrations.

Dido was evidently jealous of Inez's rising popularity, and tried her best to crush her at once and forever. However, both ladies recovered their equilibrium, met afterward in society on amicable terms, and looked the most brilliant daggers at each other from their handsome eyes. At last they wisely buried the hatchet, and harmony came out of discord.

People who stand in the world's eye must expect to be talked about. Everybody's character in "Our Circle," as far as it was possible to get at it, was



thoroughly canvassed. Running the gauntlet for one's bread and butter is never the best method of getting it; but it is often adopted for want of something more inviting.

I am sorry to add that some members of "Our Circle" lived queer lives; for, after all, the freemasonry that brought them together did not unite them to each other. Some were nearly beggars, while others knew neither want nor care.

It is a singular fact that the poor are expected to conduct themselves with a great deal more circumspection than the rich, as though to make up in respectability what they lack in lucre. The question too has a direct bearing on moral economy. The rich *can* buy themselves out of crime, while the poor criminal must be tried and punished at the state's charge.

How often the rich are tempters to the poor, those whose "happier stars" have set them beyond the reach of meagre want can never know.

It may be a woman, for instance, who is struggling with sharp adversity, and, perhaps, scarcely strong or wise enough to brave the shock of fate;

and some noble-hearted man discovers this child of need. He takes a strange, warm interest in all her plans ; he so strong and grand—she so glad and grateful ! She knows no motive that he could have in all ; and there was none in the beginning but the desire to do good.

The motive grows like a giant, nursed by circumstances—she reposes so hopefully in this new-found friend ; tells him, at his earnest request, all her life—its trials, hopes, and fears. Full of pitying tenderness, he soothes her cares, and gently flatters her to smiles. Day by day, little by little, he wins her confidence,—the holy confidence that a woman gives when she has faith enough to trust the whole world—that belief in universal goodness, which, once lost, narrows us from our great possession to a gloomy penthouse.

This earnest friend is coming. She finds herself listening for his step—watching the point where first her eye may catch a glimpse of him ; yet dreams she not of danger. He knows, perhaps, that the time will arrive when she can stand alone, and with honest dignity thank him for his care. Before it

comes, he, unasked, makes her his confidant. He tells a moving story of unanswered affection in his home. A blight is on his heart. He is coldly repulsed where he should find social and domestic bliss.

Is all this sadness true?—Too true!

So it is. Wives of the wealthy, in your luxurious homes, you forget your duty. Sometimes a few little words, uttered in pettish thoughtlessness, may sting so keenly that a husband may be driven from your arms to utter ruin,—ruin worse than death—destroying forever the pure temple of domestic happiness.

But to return to the picture Fancy drew. He whom I spoke of just now was speaking still—she listening. There came creeping then stealthily to her heart a something that was not there before. Her benefactor is a suppliant. He, so generous, now appeals to her generosity. Does she argue the question? That would not avail. He can out-argue her. By his good deeds he has won her confidence, if not her heart. Nature pleads with a thousand tongues. Is there none to bid her back from the fearful precipice?

Woman, woman, pause there! Young, beautiful, unprotected, know that man has no pity for you, though he may worship, pouring adulation with every breath, while you stand upon your pedestal of virtue. Woe, if you descend from thence! Though you were almost divine, he sees the downward stepping. The charm vanishes—you are fallen! Poetry ceases to clothe an unhallowed intimacy in a garb of beauty.

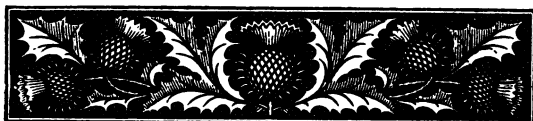
O perverse and inconsistent man! pleading with persuasive eloquence for the very boon which, if granted, leaves a memory upon your heart, an ineffaceable shadow, that you would drive away, but cannot.

And you, O woman! in your conceit believe that yours is an exceptional case—that your error is different from that of all others. Blind security of power! You are vain in your own eyes. “More rational than reason” you cannot be. You may be beautiful as an angel, wise as Minerva, chaste as Diana, but all Heaven’s graces can never reinstate you in the estimation of him for whom you have laid aside your fairest grace.

I will not say that there was anybody in "Our Circle" so tempted or so lost. It is possible that there may have been. Such might be found in any circle, or even in those wastes outside, where, God grant, a warning voice may find an echo!

Most of the members of "Our Circle" are now scattered forever, like autumn leaves buried in the lap of winter—their names and their histories almost forgotten.





## CHAPTER XIV.

**S**PRING came and summer flew away ; and in the early days of the glorious golden autumn, we went to visit Niagara. I can never say what I felt when I beheld, for the first time, that wonder of nature. The lateness of the season had scattered the gay troops of visitors, so many of whom come to gaze with soulless eyes on that sublime spectacle. We arrived late in the evening,—just giving a glance over the scene by the timid light of the young moon ; and then to sleep, lulled by that monotonous roar, like far-off perpetual thunder.

The morning dawned gayly, and I was up to welcome its very first peep over the mist-mantled hills. My uncle had engaged a guide for me on the previous evening, for I had a wish to visit first alone

some of the localities within reach, and to go with them afterward.

So many writers have attempted to depict that indescribable and awfully sublime scene, that I waive all further attempt, well knowing my own inability.

I felt the wildest impulse to drop myself into the abyss, the fleecy foam rose so soft and wavingly from that great waste-way of eternity,—yet looking like great white lions, with mighty, floating manes, leaping from their dark lairs. My excitement drew a gentle reproof from my aunt, at breakfast, and Uncle Clare said my enthusiasm was infectious.

After breakfast we crossed over to take a view from the Canada side. I desired to stand at all the various points from which the Falls could be viewed; and I coaxed my uncle and aunt until they reluctantly consented to my adventuring, attended only by a guide, under the veil of the fall, they declining to keep me company on the expedition.

In a few moments, equipped with the usual oil-cloth garment (which is certainly anything but becoming), my guide and I descended the long flight

of steps leading down from Table Rock to the level of the waterfall. High above our heads the broad veil of misty spray dashes madly into the foaming pool beneath.

A few steps, and we had passed the blinding shower which almost stops the breath, and then the deafening roar and the everlasting fall of the returnless waters shut me from the world. I was deaf and blind ; but for an instant my sensations were of the most intense and rapid character. I felt a little bewildered ; but, refusing the assistance of my guide, I passed out to the farthest extremity of the grotto, slipping every moment on the loose, wet rocks. I heard no word of caution, but, on reaching as far as I saw safe footing, I leaned forward to see if I might venture still farther. My feet slipped from under me, and I should inevitably have been lost in the whirling waters, but for the grasp of a strong hand dragging me from peril. It was all in an instant ; and, turning, I confronted a stranger, not my guide, though *he* stood with his black face frightened almost white.

I scarcely realized the danger that I had escaped.



Now I felt safe, and rather glad to get out once more into the open sunlight of day, whither I hurried, supported by his arm.

There we mutually paused, I and my stranger preserver. I withdrew the hood from my face—for it seemed to stifle me—and tried to thank him. “But,” said I, “thanks are poor, and words beggarly, to attempt expression in such a case. Sir, under God, I believe you have saved my life.”

“We will thank God for it,” he answered in such a tone that it struck through all the chords of my being. Those few simple words! I felt no answer coming to my lips, and it seemed natural that I should be silent.

Presently he spoke again: “I have a favor to ask of you. Do not mention this occurrence to any person. I had rather it should not be spoken of.”

“I will not,” I replied. “I am glad not to have it generally known; for, if my aunt and uncle were aware of the danger that I have so carelessly risked, they would never trust me anywhere again.”

I looked into his face, as I finished speaking. Our

eyes met; a shiver ran through me! In that one full look our souls met forever.

I retrod the broken staircase, and found my uncle awaiting me at the top. I was soon dressed anew, and in the carriage beside my aunt, when we were hurrying to the boat as fast as the horses would carry us.

Uncle Clare said, "How pale Emile is!"

"Fatigue," said my aunt. But a still small voice in the heart whispered, "Something besides that." I said to myself, "I have met my destiny!"

As we reached the boat I observed a noble-looking young man, with his back toward us, standing with his hand upon the prow, just ready to spring on board. My heart beat fast. He turned. It was the hero of my last half-hour's dream. By a trifling chance he took a seat beside me, and I had leisure for thought with reference to him, and deemed that he was a perfect realization of my ideal.

We chatted together, as even strangers may, as we walked from the boat to the hotel. The young stranger took from his bosom a handkerchief,

which he gracefully presented to me. It was mine. I remembered that I had placed it in the pocket of my water-proof dress, when going under the Falls. It had my name written in full on the corner.

After he was gone I wondered if he had noted it, and half wished I might have had the like opportunity of discovering his name ; yet I took a romantic pleasure in assuring myself that a name could be no help to his long life in my memory.

The next day we returned to Buffalo, on our way home. I wondered if I should ever meet the gallant stranger again. The adventure furnished me food for thought, and material for castle-building, until I was ashamed to build castles any more, even in Spain, on so a slender a foundation.





## CHAPTER XV.

**T**HE next summer we were spending the warm months at the dear old farmhouse at Lealands. Five years had made its changes in many respects,—few in the place, but more in individuals. The most marked of all was the change in the little brown slip of a girl now developed into a full-grown woman. The dear Dr. Gaston was there, and I loved him very much,—just as I could have loved a brother, had one been spared to me.

There came a suitor for my hand in those days—one whose passion I mocked at, for I could not make it seem sincere. This lover protested: I ignored his protestations, and listened to the voice of my heart, to see what it would teach me.

It is very wrong to educate girls to the idea that marriage is the grand ultimatum of girlhood, and

to almost make them consider it a disgrace not to get a husband. This is the fault of parents—a fault, it is true, that has the sanction of custom,—a custom to which, almost unconsciously, the wisest and best-meaning mothers succumb. The young girl begins, almost before she has laid aside her childish toys, to think of lovers, trousseaux, and where she will go to make her bridal-tour.

This may be among the wealthy. Then, cast your eye along the middle classes of society, who are too prone to ape the fashions of those higher in the social scale,—mothers and fathers, struggling through all sorts of self-denials, in order to give their young daughters accomplishments which shall render them attractive or irresistible to men, that they may be able to secure a husband from a higher station in life than they themselves have been able to occupy. It makes my heart ache to see these little ones—sickly, perhaps:—no matter! they must go to dancing-assemblies, balls, and operas, because it is the mode.

The young mind requires diversion, and it has a refining effect on the manners, as the mother thinks;

and then, when the "bachelors' ball" comes round, the butterfly mothers decorate the butterfly daughters. True, they do look like little fairies, in their delicate gauzes and silver tissue robes, with gay garlands on their innocent brows.

Innocent, did I say? Alas for the innocence of childhood raised in the hotbed of fashionable life! It takes its flight with the roses from the tender cheeks—with the sweetness of the breath, rendered impure by the fetid atmosphere of a crowded dancing-hall, or the pernicious indulgence of improper food at most improper hours.

"Doctor, I don't know what ails my little girl," says the faded mother of a languid child.

"I see nothing but the effects of over-excitement. Keep her quiet, and let her eat plain food and take plenty of exercise in the open air."

"Oh, she has plenty of exercise! She goes, twice in the week, to the dancing-school; and, in a few days, there is to be a grand gala-night, and—"

The doctor shakes his head and says, "It is the worst thing your child can do. The night-air is

poison to her ; and still worse the excitement and overheating of dancing in a crowded room."

"Just this once, Doctor ; for she will be so disappointed if she can't go !"

"Better not," says the man of physic.

But the child's wish conquers the weak mother ; and the consequence may be the sowing of the seeds of baneful evil that will never be eradicated from the girl's moral and physical nature.

It is true that we live again in our children. The wise few prove it in the training of the young persons committed to their charge ; and the frivolous many, by the cool indifference with which they watch the natures of those for whom they profess love, running to wanton waste.

Yet I would not have neglected proper gymnastics for the development of every function of masculine perfection. I would have children taught ideal measures, accompanied by music of an elevated character. But I would never have young children dancing in the intoxicating glare of gaslight, furbelowed and gegawed, till they can scarcely recognize themselves ; and, when they do, with so self-con-

scious an air that the sweet charm of childhood is completely destroyed, and you see, in the *petite* shape, the warm coquetry and restless vanity of maturer years. I would do away among children the disgraceful passion, which exists so fatally among women of the present age, to outvie each other in dress and in beaux. I would not have them competing with one another save in diligence, obedience, and childlike simplicity. There should be no dress worn by children, in these public assemblies, which could suggest the idea of social superiority. Such habits force rank natures, and make bitter jealousies.

Cultivate the ideal beauty of motion, and leave the dances of the voluptuary, which express only the softer passions and tend to immorality, to those who have passed the age or lost the disposition for improvement. The aliment with which you feed the growing passions in the hearts of your children, irrevocably determines their future.

Many parents argue that the earlier children are accustomed to fashionable amusements, the earlier they lose their relish for them.

Yes; the earlier the poison is instilled into the



veins, the earlier the decay will commence—the earlier the blood will be vitiated with the virus of fashion or folly—the earlier the pure nature of youth will sink into inanity.

But these daughters must be trained to marry well.

Certainly ; and your plan is excellent to make them worthy wives for spendthrifts and fools, who take partners without thought for the future, and with but a faint glimmering even of their present needs.

It is a growing evil ; and suffering women and their fragile progeny, infected with disease from the cradle to an early grave, are the mournful witnesses that point us to the awful truth.

O mothers ! let this voice reach you. Train your daughters to self-reliance, and not to feel that they are to marry simply because everybody does marry. If you are too poor to support them, and are depending on their making a good match for themselves and a home for yourself, don't trust to that. There are few happy marriages. There can be but few, where interest and self-love form the tie.

Train them, from earliest youth, to lives of useful-

ness. Let them have their hours of gladness, certainly; don't abridge their pleasures, but teach them to live alone, if need be. Better so than to be somebody's sickly wife. Let them labor for love, and live *true* lives. So shall woman's condition be best exalted.

In my young womanhood I had a vague idea that marriage was a necessity, particularly for a homeless girl, and supposed that I ought to feel quite grateful to the man who should offer to make me his wife, and that it would be wisdom to calculate between two lovers, and choose the best. I cannot declare that this was ever told to me, explicitly; but my mind was impressible, and that was the idea left upon it.

I cannot say that I had any particular choice between the two who asked for my hand, for there were two actual lovers in the field. The one that I thought I liked most, was at a distance, and not a favorite with my aunt; the other I saw every day, under the most favorable auspices, and he *was* a favorite with my aunt.

Being naturally grateful and adhesive, the devo-

tion of the present love won me, and I at last believed that I returned his affection; and we two strolled on together in the way many were treading. We had for all a word and a smile; but we two seemed the whole world to each other, and the days went by burdened only with apparent happiness.

Yet, at length, there were some heavy hours for me; for, with this new phase in my life, there came a strange and far-seeing prophetic vision. I had long reveries when I looked beyond the sunshine of the present, and saw a stormy sky, threatening and dark, and a fearful avalanche toppling from a lofty height, and knew, in my dream, that it would come crushing down, overwhelming with ruin the promise of my future. There were strange contradictions at work within me—loving as I could love, yet fearing what I did fear. When they brought the bridal-robe, and twined the wreath of orange-buds, a freezing shudder crept through my frame as I murmured involuntarily, “It seems to me that I am looking on my burial-shroud.”

They chid me for my wayward mood, and the young bridegroom’s eyes met mine almost in anger

as he whispered, huskily, "You wrong me—wound me with these visionary speeches!"

For his sake, I let fall the veil between my spirit and the shadows that brought these troubled doubtings.

Holy words were spoken in the presence of kindred and friends. Young heads were bowed. Bridemaids and groomsmen rehearsed their own hymeneals with softly fluttering hearts. I was a strange bride. I scarcely heard the vows to which, with icy lips, I murmured faint responses. My thoughts fled far away, beyond my own control. A face gleamed there before me—a face like Raphael's, full of glorious beauty. An unbidden guest upon my wedding-morn, I met again those calm magnetic eyes, and my soul shivered with the contact; and still it haunted me—the face of him for whom I knew no name save that of "my preserver."

I started as a deep "Amen" fell on my ears. The rite was ended, and I was Ralph Grayson's wife. The seal of benediction from high authority had been set upon it. We were linked inseparably till death should part us.

The bride-cake was broken, ruby lips just sipped the ruby wine, and merry tongues were eloquent with soft nothings.

In a few hours more, the bridal party had dispersed, and sober silence reigned within the home where we two commenced a new and untried life.





## CHAPTER XVI.

**F**ROM the hour that I became a wife, every thought and emotion of my life was given to my husband in truth and earnestness. He loved me to the full extent of his capacity, and in the plentifulness of that I lavished, I did not stop to weigh what I received.

There were some stormy moments when unruly passions would overmaster his reason, and he would speak harsh words,—words which might never be forgotten,—and utter bitter threats, which would rankle in a young wife's heart, in spite of the effort to stifle them. But the storms went by. Calm serenity renewed its heaven-born power; but I saw, too plainly, I had built my hopes of happiness upon the sands.

However, there was a new vista opening to me,—

an endless theme of hope and love. Months went by, and I became a mother; and, as I folded those precious little innocents—my own twin children—to my bosom, the mother-love came gushing in an ebbless tide through all my being. I felt that even life would be a slender sacrifice, so it brought good to them. Oh, what delight to nourish those tiny buddings from the warm fountain of maternity!

My babes! my children!—The words thrilled through and through me, till the music stifled in my heart, struggling for utterance; and those two tender creatures were given to me, and those twin souls would be my charge through all future time, and on to eternity.

I am answerable for their well-being here, and to our God for their hereafter. I have incurred a great but blessed responsibility. Father of mercies! aid me in its fulfilment. I have given an impulse to a career of which I know nothing beyond the immediate present. Fearful truth! How dare I make wider and broader the swelling flood that shall deepen till even the mother's love shall not be able to fathom it? .

These infant forms, now pliant and docile to my slightest wish, in a few years will cease to yield thus easily to my control ; but, with their growing, sinewy strength, will seek to buffet for themselves the torrent rush, with hope to dare and will to<sup>e</sup> conquer in the contest.

Oh, but for the possession of faith the soul would grasp the future with feeble hold ! As it is, we cling with a deathless grasp to all our hopes.

With quickened energies, I felt the earnest nature of my new duties. My babes and their father filled to overflowing the cup of each day's draught of pleasure. It was most dear to feel myself to be a constant need to them ; to entertain a purpose in every hour and act to benefit the loved ones. I regretted no toil, though sometimes fainting with the weight I bore. It was for them. I paused not to see to my own footing, so long as they were always safe before me. I cared nothing for the thorns in the rough thoroughfare, until, at last, one keener than the rest pierced to my heart. The wound bled inwardly, and the curdling weight blocked the wheels of life.



It is a most grievous thing to bare to the world's cold eyes scenes of domestic trouble, discordant jars, jealousies, and all the wretched train of evils which gradually come between hearts estranged. There were months through which I could not guess why my husband should show himself so morose and unkind to me—why the most trifling omission of duty should be so severely visited on my head.

I charged every faculty I possessed to keep me patient through all unmerited reproof, and hold me free from anger when rebuked too severely. And not that alone—blows were sometimes my portion; but he was raving with passion, and I forgave it him.

It pains me to recall that period. The days without so clear and beautiful, and all within turbulent, wild, and restless—that time when he could look coldly on, and see our child almost dying in my arms, and never speak one word of comfort. Then he would leave us for whole days to struggle through the dreadful hours as best we might. And, when the last hour of agony seemed drawing near, deaf to all my beseechings, he turned away with cruel

taunts, or what was worse, indifference to my anguish. The child was spared, yet it were vain to describe half the despair that darkened around our heads within the few subsequent weeks. At last, the proofs of his infidelity glared openly upon me in an unexpected way. I could not have believed how false he was, had not a strange chance disclosed the secret.

One Sabbath evening he left me while I was singing my baby to sleep in its cradle—for I had again become a mother, and amidst all my heavy-heartedness I still sang lullabies. I looked up as he was leaving the room, and said, "Stay with me, dear, to-night; the babe will soon be sleeping. Then I will walk with you, if you like."

He replied, "I will wait for you in the parlor," and left me.

Soon I went to join him—but he was not there. It was a beautiful moonlight night, but I felt very lonely. So I went back to my chamber, flung myself on the bed without undressing, and slept, but soon awoke with an uneasy sense of something wrong. My husband had not returned. The lamp

was out, which I relighted; and, looking at my watch, was frightened to see that it was two hours past midnight. I now felt alarmed for his safety.

I went to the street-door—found it still unlocked—so I was sure he had not come in. Then I wandered up and down the house, scarcely knowing what I did. I looked into the wardrobe. His vacant garments, as they hung there, seemed company for me. I touched them. A solid substance in one of the coat-pockets stopped me.

“I wonder what it is?” said I, musingly; and drew forth a package of letters, carelessly put together. As I held them, the insufficient tie broke, and they were scattered at my feet. I gathered them up again—they were unsealed, and not directed to my husband. A strange, fanciful name was on the outside.

I trembled so that I could not stand, for the writing seemed familiar. With frantic eagerness I unfolded one. I was not mistaken. It was the hand-writing of one who had professed for me the warmest friendship; and I, poor dupe, had all along believed her protestations.

Tender appellatives; an appointment to meet at the usual trysting-place; regret for something which had prevented the keeping of a promise; and a warning to be secret as the grave, for "somebody is on the watch!" Oh, what a fearful tissue of duplicity was here unfolded!

Only initials were signed to these precious, villainous letters. Several, of the same tenor, were there. Those I merely glanced at; but one turned my heart to gall. It was a copy, in my husband's own hand, in answer to one of the artful epistles which I had just thrown down in disgust.

Unlawful commerce! It was all there, plain—too plain.

I fell on my face, on the floor, in my agony, and prayed—oh, such wild, vain prayers! The paroxysm gradually subsided. While there had been a doubt, I was comparatively happy. But, oh! this dreadful certainty! And then I thought, "He must not be lost for this. No, no! I must win him back! He cannot be all evil. I will hold him in my strong arms. He shall not so peril his soul."

There I sat, unconscious how the moments sped.

It was broad daylight when he came. I heard his step at last—the step that had always set my heart bounding. But now it had no power to move me, for I was clammy cold and deathly still.

He came up the stairs, entered the chamber, and beheld me where I sat, with the signs of his perfidy lying beside me. The flickering lamp cast a sickly glare in the room. I looked up in his face, but could not speak. My tongue felt as if turned to dust—my throat its sepulchre.

He spoke hurriedly. “Have you been up all night? I always tell you not to sit up for me. I was detained on a business matter until too late to come home, and I took a bed at the hotel.”

I found a voice, for I thought perhaps it was so. I simply said—

“I thought it very strange that you were away for the whole night. I have been alarmed. Nay, more; I have lost all faith, if what I see is true. These letters!”

“Those foolish letters, Emile? Did they make you doubt me? They are none of mine. I found

them in the counting-room. They belong to some of the boys."

"Hush!" said I, springing up and laying my hand over his lips. "Do not add falsehood to the other crime. Your own hand is against you! But for that, perhaps, the subterfuge had served you! And worse than all, O Ralph, that you could indulge in such a wanton game the very day that our darling boy was near the gates of death!"

He sank upon a chair, and dropped his head upon his breast. I could not bear to see him suffer. I knelt at his feet, and besought him, for his children's sake and for all our sakes, to return to us, and love his home again. He promised then, and took the mighty name of God upon his lips to witness it. I believed that the oath would be kept.

Alas! his vows were like words written on the sand, of which the sweeping tide leaves not a trace.





## CHAPTER XVII.

**M**ANY a weary night I sat to watch for his return. I could not sleep till he was at home. Neither angry words nor cruel blows could drive me from this pitiful solace. I knew that he no longer loved me; but still I strove to keep my place, an unloved and neglected wife.

“Why,” I despairingly asked, “why am I condemned to this fate?” Alas, the answer is inevitable, and my overburdened spirit sinks under the terrible weight. He loves another!

There is no grief in life like this—none under heaven! Death might sweep each tenderly loved friend into his loathsome caves, leaving me desolate—but he could inflict no pang like this! False friends might whisper falser tales to him, to my dishonor, till he spurned me, or taught my own

sweet babes to despise their mother; yet, in the consciousness of innocence, I could find comfort for such grief, trusting in heavenly justice till purer brightness should be restored to that which was but tarnished by the breath of malice.

But to lose my husband while yet he lives—a husband but in name! To know that I have not deserved the loss of his affection!

I was frantic with misery. My incoherent ravings divulged the secret burning in my brain, and those around me knew it. Then I found that it was no secret. All had been known or guessed before.

Then came long days of silence. A gloom, deeper than death's dark pall, fell around. He left me with indifference or frowns, and came back with mocking songs upon his lips. I saw the utter heartlessness that shame forbids me to speak, yet sought in every way to save him from destruction. In vain!

I could not bear to give him up. With all his faults I loved him still, yet I loved my children more. I long debated if it were best that we should



part. A gleam of the old tenderness returned, and my heart said, "No."

But fear and love of safety conquered. It is an awful thing to be the sport and in the power of one destitute of mercy or of reason to guide him. At last his evil habits affected his business relations to that extent that we were beggared. We had no roof to shelter us, and nothing to supply our daily needs. Poor—very poor—we were bankrupts in everything. So there came a point at which we bade adieu. I went forth with trembling fear, for the way looked dark and lonely to me.

Thus we parted, and went wandering separate ways through life's varied scenes, unloving, companionless.

Through much tribulation I have gained wisdom, and do not blame now where once I condemned. Perhaps, in my earnest vigilance on some points, I left at others a loophole for duty to slip through, and thus was but reaping the reward of my shortsightedness.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

**I** COULD not bear to linger among the familiar scenes where my sorrows had fallen upon me. Even the kindness of my friends was burdensome; and my children—though their happiness was dearer to me than anything in life—with their sweet faces and gentle voices pained me. I could not take them with me, exposing them to the inconveniences which I might experience before I could give them a comfortable home. I left them in the charge of friends, with whom they would receive far better care than I could bestow in my unsettled state. My heart was very sore at parting with them; and then there arose within my sluggish veins the wish for something that I could not name—a hope, perhaps—that aroused me from my apathy. Then I said;

"I will throw off this dead and useless past,  
As a strong runner, straining for his life,  
Unclasps a mantle to the hungry winds.  
A mighty purpose rises, large and slow,  
From out the fluctuations of my soul,  
As, ghostlike, from the dim and trembling sea,  
Starts the completed moon."

I left all that I loved, and, in the heart of a distant city, sought labor to provide for my daily wants. The needle seemed the only thing to be thought of, at the moment. Gladly I availed myself of its humble instrumentality. Immediate necessity for active exertion, at this time, was my only security against madness.

I sought and found lodgings in a retired and humble quarter of the metropolitan city. Something must be done at once for a livelihood, and I sallied forth to find that something.

For the first three days my efforts were unsuccessful. Terrible days they were ! The rain was incessantly falling ; the winds were chilling and cold, and my comfortless and desolate apartment—seven by eight, up four flights of stairs—was all, and almost more than I dared venture to afford.

I wandered about in the drenching rains, and waded through the mud and filth of the reeking streets, till my senses were all sick. On the fourth day the sun shone, and I had hopes that it might bring me what I sought.

So it did. From one of the great "slop-sewing" establishments, in Fulton-street, I found my prayer for work answered in the shape of four packages of shirts, six in a package, for the making of which I was to receive twenty-five cents each. So I hurried back with my bundles up to my little room, and commenced the business with spirit.

I tasked myself to finish one of the garments before I slept. The day was nearly spent, and the next day I meant to make two from morning to night. There was nothing to interrupt me but my sad thoughts; and now and then a stray tear would drop on the flying needle, retarding its swiftness for a moment. Such delay was worse than useless, and I murmured, "Peace, be still!" and thus compelled myself to toil on in tearless resignation.

The use of the needle was not new or strange to me; nor was close application for many hours an

unusual matter. Therefore, I easily finished what I had to do, and laid me down to sleep on my narrow pallet ; and there for a while, amid worlds of sleep and gorgeous dreams—for my visions of the night were beautiful and grand—forgot my poor surroundings, till the glimmer of day aroused me to a renewal of thought and action.

As the celestial dawn looked forth, a bright ray struggled through the low window that lighted my poor chamber, and one large, lingering star flashed like the eye of God from out the far-off purple ether. I felt the deep assurance of the Father's love, the consolations of a hope, an inspiration, that mounted like the skylark in a flood of joyous song, bearing my spirit out above and beyond the time-stained and cheerless dormitory that confined me within its narrow walls. I did not care for the trials of yesterday, nor for the trials of to-day. I dreamed of a future, and blessed my Maker for light, for labor, and for solitude, receiving as cheerfully as possible either good or evil.

Quickly I put in order the scanty furniture of the chamber, and then, arming myself with needle,

thimble, and scissors, commenced the war between time and stitches. Which will win?

Vigorously I plied my task all through the flying hours, barely delaying long enough to eat the simple meals which my landlady, Mrs. Trevor, brought to me. These were palatable, but had been prepared with extreme economy. That day I finished all I had intended, but felt, as I composed my throbbing head and aching side to rest, that I could not do such a task every day.

There was no world for me, outside the tenement in which I dwelt, in all the wide vast city—no world I dared hope would soon be mine, for I could not bring my children to share my scrimped means and pitiful income; and there seemed to be no promise of better days. So I toiled on, preaching to my soul “patience.”

I have said there was no world outside, but there were many beings within the four walls which I called home, and thus I learned some new and startling facts in life’s great lessons.



## CHAPTER XIX.

**M**RS. TREVOR held a lease of the first, third, and fourth floors, filling her rooms with boarders and lodgers, as promised to be most profitable. She was a widow, with an only son and daughter. Her husband had been a respectable lawyer, but had died poor. His widow adopted the common course of securing a home for herself and children by keeping a cheap boarding-house. What a prolific source of revenue such business proves! How so many people contrive to live, thrive, and make a show on nothing a year, has always appeared to my unpractical mind one of the great marvels of human effort.

Mrs. Trevor had proved herself an excellent manager. She had brought her daughter forward. Thanks to the excellent schools, of which all may

avail themselves, she had acquired a passable education, and, with the aid of hired pianos and cheap music-masters, had cultivated an original taste for music into a rather pleasing accomplishment.

Isidore was pretty, vain, heartless, and a coquette. She could be trusted, for her self-love was strong enough to carry her, unharmed, through countless flirtations.

Edgar, the son and brother, was one of the noblest and best-hearted beings that I ever knew. Still he was a source of grief and disquiet to his mother. Edgar was a universal genius, susceptible, irritable, and totally unfitted to cope with the rougher natures by which he was surrounded; and, like a spoiled child of genius, always in want, because he would not give his attention to one thing for a sufficient length of time to make it lucrative. With fine perceptions of art, without the means of perfecting himself in any branch that might become a source of revenue, with powerfully inventive faculties, his half-created ideals, which time might have matured into something serviceable for human uses, only served to lumber his mother's little rooms.



In fact, when I first knew him, his life seemed useless, if not aimless—not for want of talent, not for want of a lofty ambition. Others said he lacked perseverance and application; but it appeared to me, on better acquaintance, that judicious encouragement and efficient aid would develop faculties which in the end might bless the world and their possessor.

His boyish devotion to myself was the theme of many a sly jest and meaning smile among the various members of his mother's family. That could not affect him; and for my part, I never knew it until the jest had passed.

He was twenty-three years of age, but no one would have supposed him to have been more than eighteen: very slight, and not tall, with a style of beauty rather that of a delicate woman than like a young man: an expression of face altogether angelic. Golden-haired, blue-eyed, fair-browed, gifted friend of mine! Where art thou wandering now? With thy pure, earnest nature and high hopes, hast thou found a theatre at last worthy of thy ambition—sufficient for thy noble aspirations? I will not doubt it. Spirits like thine will struggle to the light.



## CHAPTER XX.

**A** FOREIGN family occupied the second floor. A small back-room was rented by a young woman, of whom no one in the house seemed to know anything. She rather avoided the society of her neighbors; but she appeared to be forlorn and suffering. That was enough to make me tacitly claim sisterhood with her.

I occasionally met her in company with a very lovely little girl, about five years old, upon the stairs. Mrs. Trevor said that the child was her own; but, from her extreme youthfulness of appearance, I could scarcely credit the relationship. Several times I attempted to attract the little one's attention; but as she did not seem to be pleased with my overtures, I finally gave up the endeavor.

In the hive of my adoption, where all were busy,

I felt no inclination to stay my hand from whatsoever it found good or serviceable to do. One evening, as I was carrying a package of finished garments to the establishment that supplied me, I was obliged to wait a few moments at the desk for a new supply. A woman stood just before me, waiting like myself.

"What name?" said the clerk.

"Ruth Nelby," replied a low, sweet, tremulous voice.

The name was registered. She turned. It was the second-floor, back-room lodger! We stood face to face, and I could not help speaking.

"Our paths intersect," said I.

"Yes. Do you return immediately?" she asked.

"As soon as I get my work," I replied. "Will you wait?"

She bowed assent, and drew aside to wait for me.

In a few moments I joined her, and we walked home together.

"You are a quick walker," said I, as we entered the street in which our house stood.

"I always feel in such haste," she replied, "for I

am obliged to leave my child locked in my chamber, and the fear that something may befall her while I am away almost gives me wings."

"Well," said I, "you need do that no longer; for I shall be glad and happy to take charge of her whenever you must leave her."

She thanked me with the utmost sweetness, and said :

"My little silent girl is not much trouble. Poor Cherub! she is unconscious of her own misfortune."

"To what do you refer? I have seen so little of her that I am at a loss to understand you."

"Have you not discovered that my little one is deaf and dumb?—but, oh! a thousand times more precious to me than the most perfect child that fondest mother ever pillowed with pride upon her heart!"

"She is a sweet little thing, and has a face full of intelligence," I replied; "and for the heavy grief of her misfortune the mother's wisdom will find a palliative. Her singular beauty will be less a source of danger to her, and you may be almost sure your darling will never go out into the world, to form

those ties which would in a measure deprive you of her love and devotion. Even in our severest afflictions there is some comfort, and the Hand that chastens can also heal."

"Oh, bless you for your kind, comforting words!" she said. "Soon, very soon, I will tell you what, and why, I fear for her. Good-night!" and with flying feet she mounted the stairs to her room.

I stopped to say a few words to Mrs. Trevor; and while I was speaking, a sound fell on our ears, startling and strange. A woman's shriek rang through the building, like the knell of departing hope. It came from above, and we all hurried out to learn the cause. Ruth Nelby tottered down, and fell senseless at the foot of the stairs. It was evident that something terrible had overtaken her. I thought of the child, and, leaving her to the care of those about her, I hurried up to discover, if possible, some clue to her wretched state. The door of her room stood open. It was empty—the child was not there.

They brought her up, still unconscious, and laid her on her bed. Few questions were asked. There

was no one to answer; and we could only wonder what had become of the little one. The mother told me that she had left her locked in her room. The key was in the door, and the poor woman lay convulsed and insensible.

After a little while, by the aid of restoratives, she came out of her spasm and grew calm. Presently she sat up, without assistance, and her quivering lips framed a few words: only I knew and comprehended the fulness of her misery.

"They have stolen my child; and there can be no more comfort for me on this side of the grave."

"Who has done this thing?" I asked.

"One to whom the law would give the right of possessing her," she replied—"her father."

"Why, then, did he take her by stealth?"

"Perhaps to avoid a trial. Perhaps he feared, if the case were brought into a court of justice, in consideration of her helpless condition, that she might be given to me, at least, during her more tender years. But as he has her in his possession, he will make his story good, if I contest the point, and will keep her in spite of me. More than all," and her

voice faltered as she said it, "he hates me, and will do anything to rob me of my peace, instigated as he is by one who holds rule in the home that was once chastely mine. Because I chose poverty, labor, beggary, starvation, rather than to live a willing partner in crime, they seek to torture me. They know well how to wring my heart. For one whole year I have escaped successfully their snares, and have kept my little one beyond their reach,—never trusting to one of my former friends, fearing that even friendship might prove false—never leaving her for one moment, except to get supplies of work, which has barely sufficed to keep her in bread; and *then*, locked secretly in my chamber, have I thought her safe. Safe! but, oh, there is no safety for the poor and unfortunate! Their holiest impulses are misconstrued. Their most sacred rights are torn from their bleeding hearts, and all their strong affections trampled beneath the foot of power, of baseness, of perfidy. They have hunted me down at last—down to my destruction!

"O Father in heaven! let me not forget that Thou art a God of mercy and of justice. In the bit-

terness of my anguish I had well-nigh forgotten Thee!"

Words were worse than useless as medicine to such woe, and we sat in silence, watching the poor woman, with dew-distilling pity in our eyes.

One by one the sympathizing party went out, till only Edgar Trevor and myself were left to watch, or, if we might, to comfort the fair mourner.

Still she sat crouching, bowed together in motionless, tearless grief. What could we do or say? I looked imploringly at Edgar, hoping he might suggest some thought which would arouse her from that fearful apathy.

"You will seek redress from the law for this wrong, Mrs. Nelby, will you not? I am sure you will find it. Command my services, dear madam, to any extent. If I have not the power to serve you individually, I have friends among lawyers, men who are eminent in their profession. You must allow the case to be brought to trial."

"I fear it will be useless," she replied, "to trouble any one with the affair. Mr. Nelby's wealth and business position will outweigh all that may be ad-



vanced in my favor. After the step he has taken to-night, I feel so convinced of his determination to ruin me, soul and body, and drive me to despair, that I have no hope of any effort succeeding to restore to me my child.

"Oh! my lost darling, must I give you up? How dreary life looks without your smile! When you were with me, even this poor chamber was bright as a bower of paradise. But now, how dark, cheerless, and dreary!"

"Mrs. Nelby—"

"Oh, call me Ruth," said she, "for I am Ruth,—they named me well,—misery and sorrow!"

"Well, dear Ruth, lie down a little, and try to compose yourself as much as possible. Where does Mr. Nelby live?"

"A great way up town, in —— street."

"Do you think he has taken the child to his own house?"

She thought a moment before answering, and then said, "I think he has. I think he would not trust her elsewhere."

"Then," said I, "can you not claim the privilege

of seeing her every day, until the law may decide to which she shall be given? He surely could not refuse you that."

"You do not know him," she replied. "He would gloat over every pang he could make me suffer. My pleadings would be music in his ears; and she—that woman—would encourage him with malicious smiles, or drive him on with scornful taunts.

"I dread to meet them, but I must, to-morrow. I will! I will brave everything to fold my child one instant to my heart, and to bless her dim and half-developed soul with the light and warmth of a mother's love."

"Be comforted, Ruth! There is a prophetic instinct within my heart which tells me that you will possess your child again, all your own, sooner than you think. I know not by what means, but I am certain that it will be accomplished."

All night we watched, wakeful and constant sharers in our sister's sorrow. When the first pale ray of the dawn saluted us, we hailed it with calm and trustful joy. Mrs. Trevor came in, offering to do everything to make Mrs. Nelby comfortable—

but all the world could not do that until she had found her child. She could not rest, and went out alone, as she preferred, in the early day, on her mission of love. God speed her !

I mounted to my sky-lighted room, and, plying the shining implement of labor, found plenty of food for thought, and enough of time and silence to digest the matter.

I had acquired a peculiar faculty of forgetting my own existence and of becoming absorbed in that of another. Here was a subject that was appealing to my strongest sympathies. I tried to compare our two lives—Ruth Nelby's and mine. We were both young—both wedded—both alone. Each, seemingly by her own act, was an alien from her husband's heart. She had left a home of luxury to escape the worst indignity that a husband can offer to a wife while still sharing his bed and board ; and I had fled from ruin, brutality, and shame. Here we two had met and were buried in our youth—shut out from our rightful heritage, condemned to solitude or slander. No delicate mind would hesitate, for an instant, which to choose—women dependent on their own

exertions and the caprices of the foreman of a sewing establishment, liable to be told, any day, there was no more work for them, and sent hunting up and down the busy mart pleading for labor, or to go back without it to starve.

If woman can submit to the insults which youth and an agreeable person sometimes provoke from coarser-minded men, she may find work in plenty, and set her own price on her labor. Otherwise, she must submit to be scowled on, suspected, tempted. The poor seamstress has always an ideal beyond her position, and her ardent and impressible nature, wrought on by circumstances, is subject to temptation, and not often crowned with the strength of Divinity to resist, as was He, the refuge of poor humanity, "Christ tempted in the wilderness."

All this is hers to combat, to live down, to suffer through, or to fall under.

There were points of startling similarity in our histories; but I soon lost my own identity in the force of indignation aroused in contemplating Ruth Nelby's flagrant wrongs, for which there seemed to be no immediate redress.

It was nearly mid-day when Ruth returned. I saw at a glance that she had been unsuccessful in her attempt to see her child. To my look of inquiry she shook her head, then sank in silence on a chair.

“Did you not find them?” I inquired.

“I found the house apparently deserted; and, after ringing some time at the door, a servant made his appearance from the rear, and said that the family had left town. To my question, ‘When did they leave?’ he replied, ‘Three days ago.’”

“It is only a feint,” said I, “to delude you into a belief of their absence. What means do you think were employed to gain admittance to your room, when you had the key in your pocket?”

“I think they entered by the aid of a false key; and I now recollect something that did not give me a moment’s thought at the time I noticed it. I—usually so full of apprehension and watchful of danger—found a small quantity of wax adhering to the key-hole of that door, and never dreamed how it might have come there.”

Mrs. Trevor said that the same person who in-

quired for Ruth, and was admitted the evening previous, called once a few days before. "Probably he watched you go out. A perfect impression of the lock was first obtained, and at last a false key was used to gain possession of the child."

Now the color of her grief assumed a new feature, as the thought of her darling's helplessness forced itself upon her mind.

"Who will minister to her wants? Who can interpret her signs? She will suffer so with strangers, for she cannot make herself intelligible to them, or they make their purposes known to her. She has had no other care than mine since she was born. The thought of all that she may suffer adds a sharper pang to this sharp, hard trial."

Thus, with piteous accent, the mother still bemoaned her loss, raising sad anticipations to increase her pain; and, as it were a part of the beloved thing, fondled the grief that grieved her.

I was bankrupt in consolation, and forbore to offer her a paltry subterfuge.

Poor Ruth Nelby! those were heavy days for her. The sewing was all neglected. She had lost the

spur to action. She spent the hours lingering wistfully about her husband's house in the vague hope of catching a glimpse of "Cherub," as she always called the child, and the nights in pacing her solitary chamber, to her as hollow as a tomb.





## CHAPTER XXI.



LETTER was left for Mrs. Nelby one morning during her absence. I held it out to her when she came in. She took it, glanced at the superscription, and her face, neck, and hands crimsoned painfully for a moment. The next receding tide of life left her as white as the paper that she held.

"It is his hand," she uttered with difficulty, and her eyes were fixed on the contents, which she devoured with trembling eagerness. She then handed the letter to me, and speaking quite calmly said, "Read for yourself; see how he bargains with me for my very life!" The letter was as follows.

"MRS. NELBY:

*Madam*—I have asserted my prerogative as a father, and have taken my child, your child, or our child, just as you will. My affections are



vested in her, as well as yours. You have kept her hidden from me for one whole year ; and I have taken advantage of an unguarded moment on your part to appropriate to my pleasure what is my own. I am well aware that you will urge your claim as paramount to mine. Well, I yield it on certain conditions. Return to my house as my lawful wife, as is your bounden duty, and submit yourself to your husband's authority, as the law inculcates. Do this, and you are at liberty to enjoy the society of your child.

"Your affections I will not presume to control ; your movements I must, else you will see her no more, as I shall obtain legal custody of her person, and you, madam, must suffer the penalty of your obstinacy.

"According as this is answered I remain yours, or otherwise,

S. G. NELBY."

"Decide for me," she murmured ; and her head dropped on my shoulder, like a lily broken from its stem.

"What *would* you do, Ruth ?" I asked.

"For the child's sake I could do that," she replied, pointing to the letter, that I could scarcely refrain from trampling under foot.

"He dare not, he cannot do what he says, Ruth. He is only trying to intimidate you from pursuing a legal process for her recovery. He knows you are weak, now—worn almost to death by his treatment. He knows your heart is yearning for your child, and would lead you over a precipice to your destruction, with an empty promise and his past baseness as your only guaranties for future behavior. You would wrong yourself and wrong your child, to accept so mean a bounty, proffered in such a guise. Be strong! Suffer a little longer, and your child will be given back to you without your yielding to these most insulting and unworthy conditions. Now I have something pleasant to tell yon. Edgar and I have not been idle all these days. I have seen your 'Cherub.'"

"Where? Quick! tell me where!" She pressed her heart with her clasped hand to still its panting.

"Very early this morning, in the street at the back of the house in which Mr. Nelby lives."

“Do you remember Nettle?”

“The black nurse? yes. Good Nettle! Is she with Cherub? Oh, I am easier now. I shall see her, shall I not? When, oh, tell me when! Oh, my precious little one! Let me go now, at once!”

“It is too late to-night, Ruth; but in the morning you shall go. I have made an agreement with Nettle, on the promise that no attempt should be made to carry the child away from her, that you shall see her to-morrow, and every day, until something better shall take place for you both than a mere flying interview.”

I felt her head pressing more heavily against my shoulder. I lifted it up to look upon her face. She had fainted.





## CHAPTER XXII.

**E**DGAR TREVOR was busy with Mrs. Nelby's case; and, now that she could feast her eyes for a few moments every day on her treasure, and her heart-hunger was somewhat appeased, she began to heed our friendly admonitions with reference to her health, and to look a little at the strength of the claim to be advanced at the next session of the Supreme Court for her right to her child.

She answered her husband's letter with an honest, unaffected, and noble spirit, telling him frankly her intention of seeking redress from the arm of the law, and bade him remember, once for all, "Although you are the father of my child, there rolls between us an insuperable and eternal sea."

She became more composed as her fate seemed

rounding to its full; and we two sat, day after day, silently, sadly, stitching together.

“Stitch! stitch! stitch!  
In poverty, hunger, and dirt.”

Not all that, for *we* were not hungry; but we were too poor to take time to always keep tidy. Finally, Ruth Nelby proposed a community of fire and light, as the evenings were lengthening and becoming cooler. It proved a pleasant and profitable arrangement to all parties. We were more cheerful and more comfortable.

Edgar Trevor read while we sewed, and Isidore flirted in the next room. Mrs. Trevor dozed over her knitting, in a stuffed chair, in the warmest corner. The clock counted the unoffending minutes as they broke with an expiring sigh on the wheels of time; the fire glowed in the sooty grate; and the cat purred composedly on the hearth-rug, a perfect type of irresponsible animality.

Warmth, and light, and food, and social converse are wondrous barriers against the remembrance of sorrows. Ruth Nelby lived on a hope. I had

hardly that to sustain me ; yet I could not afford to droop, and bravely steered my bark. The beacon-light was gone ; but helm and compass still were left to me with which to steer over the mountain-waves.

Several weeks must elapse before the decision of the court could be obtained relative to the disposal of Ruth Nelby's child. The impulse of industry seemed to have returned to her with full force after her misfortune. "For," said she, "I shall need all, and more than all I can possibly earn, to carry my plans into effect, and must endeavor to provide a more comfortable home for my darling when she returns to me."

Our work began to be irregular, from some inexplicable cause ; and that threatened serious embarrassment to both of us. As it had been, the pay was so little for the amount of work, it required application and the most rigid economy to keep out of debt.

We were good needle-women—too good, Mrs. Trevor said, for the kind of sewing we did—and, without saying anything to us, for fear of failure,

she undertook to get us supplied with work, that should bring a better income, from a first-class ready-made linen establishment. A woman was at its head, and was very particular as to whom she employed, and preferred that the sewing should be done under her immediate superintendence.

Mrs. Trevor became responsible for us, however. An agreement was made that we should be supplied with order-work at an advanced price. We were to go for it and return it, and that was the only recreation in the open air that we dared allow ourselves.

Well might we dream, and sigh as we dream, and chat as we sighed, of the days of yore, when the woods and fields made life seem one long holiday, with the blue skies bending freely over us; when laughter welled from our hearts like music; when youth, and hope, and love lent enchantment to the sternest realities.

“ Work, work, work,  
From weary chime to chime;  
Work, work, work,  
As prisoners work for crime!

“Band, and gusset, and seam,  
Seam, and gusset, and band—  
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumbed,  
As well as the weary hand.

“Oh, but to breathe the breath  
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet,  
With the sky above my head,  
And the grass beneath my feet!  
For only one short hour  
To feel as I used to feel,  
Before I knew the woes of want,  
And the walk that costs a meal!”

Ruth still adhered to the plan of preparing her meals in her own room. She took very little time, and I often thought that bitter tears had moistened the crust to which penury had forced her.

Many a day Mrs. Trevor took from her own scanty table a warm bit, which she contrived, though with difficulty, to make Ruth accept. She said she did not care for warm food, or meat, or tea.

Poor child! may the cup of water and the dry morsel give nourishment to thy fainting soul!







## CHAPTER XXIII.

**N**EARLY three months had slipped away "since we were first acquainted." Ruth saw her child nearly every day. The good-natured Nettle seemed to enter into the merits of the case with hearty earnestness. She said, "Mr. Nelby tells me take very best care of little Alice. How can I take better care of her than let the poor thing see her mother every day? Child pines for its mother, mother pines for her child. Old Nettle takes child out to the fresh air; meets mistress, and she kisses her baby like mad.

"Oh, go 'long! Nettle a'n't a brute; nor a'n't a gwine for to be! Mistress Nelby good woman. Mr. Nelby treats *me* well; pays me good wages; tells me, 'Mind what I say, Nettle.' Yees, sir. Didn't say, 'Don't let Miss Nelby see the child!' Says, 'Don't let the child out of your sight!' No, sir. I

mind one, mind t'other ; good friends to both, and hurt nobody. Does some folks ever so much good. Oh, go 'long! Nettle's all right!" and wound off with an expressive snap of her black fingers. Thus she quieted her easy conscience.

It was the evening before the day which should probably decide the point in law of Nelby *versus* Nelby. Edgar was doing his best to make the time pass agreeably to us. "And, now, Mrs. Nelby," he remarked, "I have something here that will interest you, particularly on Cherub's account. It is a treatise on the education of the deaf and dumb in Prussia and Saxony. Shall I read it to you?"

"Oh, certainly! I shall feel interested, although it will probably never benefit my child. If I am able to bear the separation (if she is mine) of putting her at a school here, I shall do well."

"Well," Edgar replied, "it will be pleasant to know how they manage such matters in the old country, at all events."

Then he proceeded to read the interesting account of the mode by which deaf mutes are taught to speak with the lips and tongue. It is a common

opinion, in regard to this unfortunate class, that the organs of speech as well as those of hearing are defective. But this has been shown to be an error; the incapacity to speak resulting only from the incapacity to hear. By a series of simple experiments the pupil is made conscious of the fact of sounds; such, for instance, as observing the effect of sudden shocks upon animals and men. The sounds of the letters are next taught by making the pupil imitate the exact position and motion of the teacher's lips, tongue, etc. By patient endeavor the combinations of vowels and consonants are effected, and the deaf and dumb scholars are brought to read with as much distinctness of articulation and appropriateness of emphasis as is heard from children who are born without defect. Indeed, it becomes absurd to speak of the *dumb*; where this philosophical system of instruction prevails, there can hardly be any dumb persons.

As the account was finished Ruth sighed. "What a benefaction to the afflicted! But how is my dear silent daughter ever to be helped by it?"

"Perhaps Providence will show the way," said I.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

**W**E were startled from our dreams that night by the clanging of the fire-bells. A hundred brazen tongues flooded all the air with the tidings of danger.

“A blaze of red  
O'er heaven is spread;  
Yet day has not dawned  
On the mountain's head.”

Higher and still higher shot the flame, thrusting a sharp mocking tongue into the very face of heaven.

The clatter of engines was heard below, mingling with the shouts of an excited multitude, and all hearts were beating with a determination to counteract the march of the common foe. Many a bold, brave-hearted one perilled his life, standing at the

very jaws of death, in an effort to save life or property from destruction.

It was a terrific scene. Several lives were lost,—of men who, in the fulness of health and strength, watched the last night's sun go down, never more to rise for them. One of these was Ruth Nelby's husband. While attempting to rescue some valuables from the burning ruins of the house of an absent friend, the walls fell. By a companion who came near sharing his fate, he was heard to exclaim, "My God! I am burning to death!"

They were the last words that he uttered. After a day's search, his charred and blackened remains were exhumed from the fearful grave. He perished in the attempt to render an important service to a friend who loved him like a brother, and who mourned his untimely death with an unfeigned sorrow.

Mrs. Nelby was gently and cautiously apprized of the tragical event. Its effect on her was overwhelming; the fire of her natural resentment died out, and the faults of her dead husband were forgotten.

Her husband's brother, resident of a neighboring city, was immediately sent for by telegraph; and, by his advice and that of her counsel, she returned to her husband's house, whither I gladly accompanied her; and, in a subdued and chastened spirit, she performed the last sacred duties to the dead, and was reconciled by the consciousness that she had ever paid him, while living, all duty and reverence, save that which interfered with her sense of moral obligation or her maternal instincts.

Ruth had spoken some bitter truths concerning him, which had been forced from her heart, in the hour of her agony, at the cruel separation from her child. There could be no more dispute now. The great Judge of all had settled the question; and the child belonged to the mother beyond the reach of human contest. There was no appeal from the decision of that tribunal. In the chancery of Heaven the claim of nature was sustained.

The woman who had been, in so great a degree, the cause of Ruth Nelby's trials, seemed withered to death by the awful fate that had overtaken her master. Incapable of thought or action, the

stricken creature's condition appealed most earnestly for sympathy.

Mrs. Nelby now showed her true beauty and the womanliness of her nature. Jane Foster was tended and watched over with real solicitude. Not by a hired nurse. Ruth's own hand smoothed her pillow, and performed those thousand nameless offices which the sick require, and which a gentle nature can alone recognize as needful. Nettle was often in the chamber where the sick woman lay. One morning she remarked, with the tears on her black cheek, "Mrs. Nelby is an angel for sure, if ever there was one,—she so good to that woman that treat her so bad. Great change there now. Shouldn't wonder if that there woman," pointing to the sick one, "learned to love the Lord, and live a good life after this. She can't have angels round her for nothing, nohow;" and she walked off with a sanctimonious air, which left no doubt that she reckoned herself among those blessed ministrants. And why might she not? "Black and white all the same to God," was one of her favorite truisms.

That morning the sick girl had told us a strange

dream, or vision, through which she had passed the last night. "I thought," she said, "that I had passed the bounds of earth, and lay stranded on the shore of eternity. But my eyes were darkened that I saw no light. A voice came to me through the darkness, which said, 'Daughter of Earth, what shall be thy doom?' I thought in my heart, but uttered no word—

"Justice already has spoken the fiat of doom for me! Whatever it be, I must meet it. I am but the breath of Thy nostrils. Thou art God! And then I beheld a silence encircling with its white flecks my naked soul. This was its first immortal raiment; and thus it lay listening to the decree, 'For a cycle of time shalt thou wander from the immediate presence of God, and thy mission shall be to reclaim the fallen!'"

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Mr. Nelby's affairs were found to be in a state of extreme complication. When the estate was finally settled, the portion coming to the wife and child was not as ample as might have been ex-



pected; still, with careful husbandry, it would be enough for all needs. Ruth Nelby insisted on a comfortable portion being settled, for life, on the unfortunate girl who was now thrown friendless upon the world. "Enough to keep her above temptation," urged the noble Ruth to those who sought to dissuade her from her generous resolution. "She has promised me solemnly to quit the city, to retire far from these scenes, and to strive prayerfully to retrieve the past. I will trust her."

She did trust her, and the trust was not misplaced. That woman now holds an honorable position in the world of workers. She has proved herself strong, and worthy of the noble confidence placed in her by the trusting Ruth. Nettle's prophecy is fulfilled. Jane Foster has become a laborer in the Lord's vineyard.

Sneer not, fair moralist, at this change! 'Tis possible—for Christ hath said it—for the vilest to be forgiven. Verily, the benevolence of redemption is good; but, oh, far better the benevolence of salvation! Do your utmost, then, to save the young from falling. Then your care and strength

will not be needed to redeem them from a fallen state.

One evening, just at sunset, Ruth Nelby had gathered her beautiful silent child to her bosom, pillowing its fair head on its faithful resting-place, and soothing it, through the sense of touch, till it fell asleep.

"Emile," said she, for thus she had learned familiarly to address me, "do you remember the account of the German school for mutes, which Edgar Trevor read to us, one evening, when Alice was away from me? How I wished then that I possessed the means, as now I do, to take her there, and have her thoroughly educated!"

"Yes; I remember. And you will go? Well, God go with you, dear Ruth!"

"I have thought of it earnestly; and am decided, in my own mind, to go immediately. Will you go with me, dear Emile, and take your perfect little daughter? Cherub and I have enough and to spare. We will live together, and share alike, in some old German city, and will read legends, and dream dreams, and educate, or oversee the educa-

tion of our daughters. You have shared our sorrows ; come, now, and share the pleasantness of life with us !”

“It would be very sweet, Ruth ; but I have duties here which nothing can set aside. I will love you ever ; but I cannot leave my children to go with you across the Atlantic.”

In a month more Ruth and her Alice, with Nettle for an attendant, set sail, to reside, for an indefinite length of time, in Germany, and I returned to my humble quarters at Mrs. Trevor’s.





## CHAPTER XXV.

**N**OW, while I toiled, there came glimpses of half-forgotten dreams, once very dear to me.

As I awoke to the new life, thoughts were born, and my lips gave them voice. A rapture pervaded my being, weaving airy dances through my brain.

I welcomed my ideal children. I revelled in the fresh delight. Each evening, the sewing laid aside, I fed and trimmed the dim lamp burning in my soul, till it threw its beams over the desolate wastes encompassing me and pointed a way to a better path. With timid confidence I felt that what I had written perhaps might find me new friends and lead me to a more congenial path in life.

Edgar Trevor said, "You are wasting your powers of mind—wearing yourself into an early grave,

by such intense application to your needle. You are capable of something higher. Why not turn to literature? I think you might do something in that way."

I answered, "I am afraid to make an attempt that may prove a failure."

"No matter," he replied; "one failure is not much. I have made many a one, and yet am not discouraged."

I then told him what I had been doing, and he was delighted. He took several of the articles, both of prose and verse, and found for them not only a market, but an order for more.

Edgar said, "Perhaps you may become famous."

I replied: "Oh, fame is nothing! I do not care for that."

"But you must!" he answered. "Let those who choose to call fame an empty bauble, and say 'I'll none of it!' do so, if they will; I shall not follow their example. The excitement of the chase is, at least, a glad delight while we are in pursuit. Suppose the heart does break in the race; still, if, flushed with the contest, we reach the goal, it is not

empty then, for the soul has won its honest reward—the purpose of all struggle.

“Mankind are ever seeking fame of some kind. The cry that has gone out into the world, that all is vanity, never has deterred one bold spirit from a great or a hopeless aim. Fame may, indeed, be but an empty bubble for the vain-glorious aspirant who seeks but self-aggrandizement, and who wins it by defaming or down-treading the real children of genius, who, perhaps, lack the physical power to contend and keep up with the sweeping throng pressing on for the prize, many of whom perish ignobly by the wayside. Often the same strong-handed, broad-shouldered, successful men stoop to strip the weaker of their proper gems, setting them in their own crowns.”

In the course of time I gained some little reputation in the literary circles of the city of my adoption, through the characteristic qualities of several magazine articles, for which I had been passably remunerated.

Mrs. Trevor had moved into a larger house, in a better street, and our social position was generally

improved. She had befriended me in my hour of trial, and I would not leave her now.

I, too, had succeeded in making such arrangements for the use of my pen, and for teaching elocution, in which art I had become proficient, that I was enabled to place my children at excellent schools, and to provide in every way for their advancement.

It was a satisfaction, I may say comparative happiness, when all these matters were finally settled, at least for one year. One year of comfort was much to me. I had entered on a mode of life that suited me ; and all the activity, heretofore smothered, now found opportunities for outlet, and the faculties that had laid long unused were easily aroused, so that I bent to my new occupations with every impulse fully awake.

The teachings from the great book of nature, whose leaves I had turned with childish fingers, gazing with wondering eyes on the pictures which each illumined page disclosed, yet with an intuitive comprehension drinking in some portion of their sublime import, yielded now their fruit.

The gipsy life in that wildwood home, where the young child sat beneath the moss-covered hemlocks, and the hoary, murmuring pine-trees—the lofty pines, slender and towering, their proud heads nodding to the questions of the complaining winds, and all the wild dark forest, where the moose and the timid deer found shelter; and, near by, the ocean, sublime in calm or in storm; the sun-gazing eagle, and the flapping of his slow, majestic wings;—everything, sight, sound, and association of those early years, after the ineffable loss of a mother's protecting hand, taught me to shun my fellows and to fly to nature for solace, finding there a tenderer friendship than any human love.

Dr. Gaston, my childhood's friend, the dark, bold seeker of mysteries, had talked to me of things beyond my years. The crucibles, and the weird lore translated by his lips from those black characters and massive tomes—the ghostly skeleton—the pungent odor from the strange lamp, and the wondrous light it gave, all came back hauntingly; and with them a vision of the dead—the loved, the lost, the worshipped Judith. What a world of vain re-



gret was submerged with her beneath the placid waters! Poor girl! carrying her sorrows in her own heart to her despairing end!

And then my wayward girlhood; my father's dismal death; and that gay, social band, that had no notion of the girl of sixteen summers, who bore beneath a cold exterior the wild, impassioned impulses of woman. One whose inattention seemed so marked, was yet mirthfully making close observations upon the motives, powers, actions, and principles of those around her, carefully summing up, although with immature judgment, the worth of each.

I loved the motion and the music, but did not always love my partners in the gay quadrille. "Miss Burton!" Yes; I remembered her with love and gratitude. She had enriched my mind with real wealth. But the great, unalterable laws of nature had been at work. The seed must lie in palpable death ere it can be quickened into life. I had had much to conquer in many ways—old habits, and new despairs, and that memory of *him*. He could not be all forgotten in a day, a month, a year—never could be wholly forgotten.

In dreams I wandered often in the past; I saw him who had been my husband, every day—each glance of his was reborn in the faces of my children. My heart at times almost denied them; but, with a determined effort, I put by the torturing thought. They were my own.

Once, as I went unconsciously along through the busy thoroughfare, I felt the shadow of a presence which was not like that of the others around. It approached nearer and nearer. I felt the step almost before I heard it. It was *his*!—my husband's! He passed me so close that his breath was on my cheek; and, like the hot and scorching south wind, it withered me for a moment. The next, I was like one shivering and bending to the blasts from the north—so quick, so subtle were the various influences which his presence threw over me. A poor apple-woman saved me from falling at the street corner. She arose, offering me some grapes, the only thing she had, as a restorative, and sustained me in her thin, withered arms, until the tremor passed; and by and by I could stagger feebly on, between the ebb and flow of the human tide setting

each way so fiercely. What was one poor shipwrecked mariner to the throng of strong swimmers? I could not cry; for the whelming waters choked and left me without utterance. But, on, on, surging hither and thither in the sordid press, on to the house I called *home*—a home without the pleasant voices of the children or the presence of their father. There, worker in that lonely nook, be still, and hush all murmuring!

And so another year was added to the cycle of ages. A moderate degree of success crowned all the toil that filled the brimming hours. Let pass the cup;—yesterday, the hyssop; to-day, the nectar; to-morrow, we guess not what!

But let it pass; 'tis good for purifications, for blessings, and for hopes, beyond the conscious present.





## CHAPTER XXVI.

**S**PRING was with us again—with its fulness of life and love, the bride of the year, with swelling buds, crowned with youthful beauty, moving gracefully yet timidly forward to the ardent maturity of summer, and then both to sleep in the fruitful lap of Autumn.

I had engaged to pass a part of the warm weather with some dear Quaker friends, the Murrays, at their pleasant home in the valley of the Mohawk. I put away the city cares for two months, left my P. P. C. at the doors of various persons, and did not forget the kind old apple-woman who aided me in a moment of suffering. I stood chatting until the passers-by must have thought I was haggling for the stand, fruits and all. She had seen trouble;—who has not? But she was an honest soul, and I

really took pleasure in listening to her homely recitals of the ways and means by which she held on to the ravellings, not "the threads of life." She said :

"I'm poor, and I've always ben poor, and I s'pose I always shall be ; but it comes harder now than it used to. I'm gittin' old ; but I've got two grand-children,—one, my daughter's child, and she's dead ; and the father's followed the seas, and he's lost. She's pretty as a pearl,—so pretty, I don't know what to do with her. 'Ta'n't safe. I've saved enough to put her to a trade. But settin' gives her an ugly pain in her side. And t'other one's a girl too. But she's helpless, out and out, as feeble as a broken-winged bird ; with a hump on her back, that grows every day, and no help to her growth neither, poor child ! As long as I live to take care on 'em, it'll do. But when I'm gone, what'll become on 'em I don't know."

"The Father of the fatherless," I suggested.

"Yes, yes," said the apple-woman, as she furtively dusted something from her eye with the cleverly patched sleeve of her gown. "I know all that talk,

but 'ta'n't sartin. Once, a great long time ago, I thought about and believed in sich things ; but I've forgot 'em all now.

"I ha'n't no faith in nothin'. Lina has ; and she teaches t'other one ; and both them got faith. But I ha'n't. I'm poor, and I've always ben poor."

"By what name do they call you?" I asked, with increased interest.

"Becky Tollman," said she.

"Well," said I, "Becky Tollman, you say yourself you don't know what they will do when you are gone. Is it not good, then, that you are spared to them? The good God does that."

"Well, I s'pose He does," said Becky. "But I don't feel as though that was doing anything great, considerin'. I don't s'pose it's right ; but that's how I feel."

"Oh," said I, "Becky, you must have faith. You will be much happier. Faith in God is blessedness in life. That faith alone can lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. I must go now ; but I shall come and see you when I return. And here is a nice, large umbrella, that I have brought to

shade you when the sun creeps round the corner, in these summer afternoons."

"Lord bless you, marm! I couldn't spare the money to buy one, and I said to myself, says I, 'It don't last long, though it does wilt you down. So, Becky, you'll get through it somehow.' But I never thought as anybody'd know how hot it is but me, and the others like me. And you, marm, how come you to think about a poor apple-woman? It almost makes me b'leve what you've ben saying a'n't all talk."

"Becky Tollman," said I, "trust my farewell injunction. Have faith in God! His goodness is always around you."

Becky enthusiastically kissed the handle of the umbrella, by way of farewell salute, as I turned the corner.

Good-bye, Becky Tollman, benighted sister on the great highway! Years threescore and ten have whitened your head with sorrow, dried the sap of life within your bones, and left you old and shaking, yet hopeless of a future, ignorant of the Father's love! Verily, the germ shall come to fruition.

Nothing can be finally lost. Even you have your mission unto men. The reeking sweat on your wrinkled brow is borne but in fulfilment of the great law—a part of the expiation for the first human error. It is as sure as life. Your poor table, with its scanty fruits, and slender fund, is greater, more precious than the money-changer's tables on the opulent Rialto, heaped with richest merchandise. None but He, the All-Father, can know the devious windings of your true but erring heart. He is your judge, Becky Tollman; and He knows that your every act but proves the existence of the very faith that your words deny.







## CHAPTER XXVII.

**I**T was on a hot July day. I stepped into the cars, glad, oh, how glad ! to escape from the mingled confusion and dust of the city. I met with no adventures on the route. The engine did the usual number of miles within the given time ; there were no delays, and that is saying a great deal. The usual amount of doleful metallic screams went up among the hills, scaring the echoes on the mountain-tops ; and as the sunset splendor fell, mantling wood and meadow with gold and purple tints, we stayed our course at the depot in the midst of the beautiful valley which was my place of destination. I thought the clamor of the hissing valves no bad imitation of a real Indian powwow, which might oft before have startled the slumbering echoes in the mighty gorge, and convince the most

valiant warrior of the Mohawk tribe, could he look again through the misty years, that Yankee invention had beaten them, even in their primitive cries. Then I fell into a little dream of that wondering people, who chose always the wildest and most romantic situations for their transient encampments.

I fancied the dusky faces of the Indians peering through the foliage; eyes flashing astonishment at the innovations of civilization; the wigwam, with its curling smoke rising to heaven like incense; then the murmuring of the foaming rapids, disturbed only by the picturesque bark canoe, paddled skilfully by some tawny son of the woods, gracefully poising himself preparatory to the dangerous rush over the boiling eddies: then with lazy indifference he floats to the shore, where his faithful squaw comes forth to meet her hunter lord.

But, in the dying out of the Aborigines, the romance of our beautiful land is lost forever. Now, instead of the smoke from the branch-woven hut, houses, towers, and spires loom in the distance at every eligible spot. Locks and canals; the tramp of the horses, and the unmusical shouts of the

drivers; steam-mills, railroads, and all the means and appliances of modern industry and progress, meet the eye. Men, of various nations and dissimilar creeds, in unsympathetic tones desecrate the old shrines where these wandering children of nature, with mysterious rites, consigned to earth their dead, trusting that their souls had passed to the pleasant hunting-grounds which await them beyond the grave.

All dreams must have an end, and so had mine. Friend Murray laid his hand on my arm, and led me away to the carriage waiting close by. A pleasant drive brought us to the house, where I met such a welcome as made my heart bound again. All aglow with happiness, they hurried me to the tea-table.

"Berthold not come yet?" said friend Murray.

"Not yet," replied Mary, the wife of John. "We will not wait, he is so uncertain."

Just then a shadow darkened the open window, and the person in question stepped into the room. I looked up. Our eyes met. There was the haunting dream of girlhood standing before me—tangible, alive. An instant—the bewildering, deafening, ever-

lasting thunders of Niagara were sounding in my ears. I felt myself floating like a weed on the edge of that terrible abyss; and then—I don't quite remember what, everything was so sudden, and so indistinct—I sat in a large armchair, and he was holding both my hands, and his touch thrilled me from head to foot. Mary Murray said :

“She is so exhausted with the journey.”

“And the long fast, I dare say,” chimed in comfortable John.

They wheeled me up to the tea-table. I protested against being considered an invalid; declared myself quite well, which Berthold, I thought, rather mischievously certified to, immediately prescribing tea and toast, which I quietly consented to take.

There was no formal introduction. My Quaker friends called him “Berthold St. Cyr:” he, falling into the habit of those around him, called me “Emile,” as though he had known me forever.

And so we met again. I had said—and I believed when I said it—there could be no second passion, after the first passionate young dream of youth. That lost or broken, the heart could never

know another. But there came a day in which my cold philosophy was baffled. I knew that the motion of my blood might be disturbed; and the veil, in which I so proudly wrapped myself, might be rent, and fall off, to leave me shivering in the light of truth.

That evening passed quickly; and my gentle hostess kissed me "Good-night," and left me to myself. There was a whirlwind of new experiences for me to battle with—a warfare of strange emotions at work in my own heart, which I dared not analyze. I was afraid to think. Was it cowardice or wisdom? Perhaps both. My heart was tugging at the lock to which the key was lost. Day after day we saw each other, but kept no record of the hours. Like two happy children let loose from school, the weeks were one bright holiday.

Glad as a bird, I sang in the woods, as we rambled, unquestioned. I could make nothing of it; but it seemed like stories I had heard of happy youth in fairy-land. It had been years since I had tasted such perfect freedom; never, with such a companion.

Berthold St. Cyr perfectly answered my ideal of excellence in manhood. I was like one happily awakened from a nightmare, in which an obscure light had discovered hideous forms. I opened my eyes, and there appeared grace, sunshine, and music to greet me. I slipped back through all the mournful past, and stood again in the glow of my eighteenth summer, and that first wild heart-beat. I threw away the broken links between then and now. Yesterday and to-morrow yielded to the blissful serenity of to-day in perfectness of hope and trust.

The present was a sweet enigma, which I cared not even to guess at. We rode, walked, talked, and studied together; and each new day brought Berthold St. Cyr, with books and treasures of mind, gleaned from the lore of many lands, till it seemed the heavens were scarcely broad enough to hold the incense of gladness rising up from the altar whereon the offerings of our hearts were laid.

I did not question why he came, with the splendor of his genius and the greatness of his mind, to illumine and make glad the deserted temple of my soul. He was to me the human type of Divine

beneficence. I rested beneath his smile. I had never dreamed of anything half so beautiful, half so glorious. He, so strong and grand! I could have sat at his feet forever.

Several weeks of cloudless sunshine had passed, and he had never once referred to our first meeting. It was evening; we had been watching the sunset. He spoke abruptly: "How little you are changed in all these years! Let us talk of what has happened to each of us in the interim."

It occurred to me that much in the interval which might have changed me more, was yet unknown to him.

"Your womanhood nobly fulfils the promise of your girlhood," he went on remarking.

I could not bear it—it seemed so like mockery. He took my hand. I turned from him with a shudder. Berthold, ever mindful of my comfort, hastily thrust down the sash of the window by which we were sitting. Did he think it was the night-air chilled me?

"Emile!"

There was that in his voice and manner which

a woman's intuition never leaves her at fault in understanding.

"You are not surprised; you will not be surprised"—he was speaking very quickly, but I dashed in with an interruption.

"Oh, no; nothing can surprise me!"

"You are fantastic to-night—in a wayward humor."

"Don't tease me!"

"Not angry?"

"No."

"Then may I hope—"

I dared not listen to that hope. How to avoid it? I started up and exclaimed, "I have found the old ballad you desired so much to hear. Shall I sing it for you now?"

At that moment John Murray, recreant Quaker that he was, came to challenge Berthold to a game of chess. I looked over the game a little while, then went out alone into the pleasant evening air to cool the fever of my thoughts, if possible.

During that half-hour of self-examination I pondered on many things that had never before entered



my heart, even as momentary questions. The inquiry came up before me, "Does Berthold St. Cyr know that I am not free to wed?"

Delicacy had heretofore kept me silent on that topic of my peculiar position, and he had never alluded, until to-night, to anything which might bring up a subject which I was too glad to be able to forget.

"Checkmate!"

An instant more he was beside me.

"Emile!"

My hour had come.

"You will listen to me now. I must say a few formal words to you, that we may more fully understand each other. I would speak to you of our possible future."

*Our possible future!* and to speak of that, involves the actual past.

"When I first saw you, dear Emile, so perfect was the charm your presence wrought on me that it could not be forgotten. That one look, from your serious brown eyes, drew me to you with a most final and instinctive bond.

“Had I been free as now, we should not have parted, except at your desire, our mutual glances so profoundly met. But a law of justice was between us. Then I was betrothed to the daughter of my father’s friend, whose plantation joined our own. It had been the heartfelt wish of both our fathers to see their interests united by the union of their children;—each with an only child—both children motherless. We grew up, fond, as boy and girl. Few other companions shared our early sports. Ida was educated quite at home; and when I left her for a college life, we felt the parting deeply.

“We were old enough to understand the fond design of our two fathers. We loved each other tenderly; and then neither of us ever thought of analyzing the motive-power, assuming it to be love. For several years a faithful correspondence and an occasional visit to my southern home gave me all I knew of Ida.

“My collegiate course completed, I returned homeward, and, stopping at Niagara, met you on the way. I had seen but little of women. There was something electric in your tone and look, some-

thing so different from what I had noticed in any other woman, that it made me thoughtful. I hastened on, and tried to forget you—and did, almost; for, in the bustle of preparation for the nuptials, which were hastening to solemnization—in the renewal of companionship with the fascinating southern maiden, whom I believed my own true Ida, I found little time to give to an evanescent memory.

“One week before the day that I should have called her ‘wife,’ chance revealed to me a conspiracy against my peace and honor too damnable to be spoken. I will not shock you with the distasteful detail of the cheat so cunningly devised for me. Suffice it that its baseness almost caused me to lose faith in woman. It sacked my heart of its abundant wealth, and sent me forth beggared of trust and confidence in all humanity.

“I left a sign to prove to her that I knew her perfidy, and went abroad for several years. I could not tell my own father the cause that I had to hate the neighborhood of home, rather preferring to bear from him the charge of fickleness, than by any explanation to expose Ida to his contempt. She

escaped detection, and finally wedded an honest man, who loved her, and, in his blissful ignorance, is happy in her arms.

“When years had passed, I sought my home again, and found my father changed and broken by disease, and needing much my care and presence to soothe his declining years. And I need not tell you, Emile, my joy to find you free, unmarried, and to hope—”

“Stay, stay!” I whispered huskily. “You are mistaken! I am not unmarried—not free! I have been silent too long! Can you forgive me?”

“Forgive you! Oh God! what have you done?” He wrung my hand in silent agony.

But when I showed him all that had been, from first to last,—all the doubtings, despairings, hopings, of those weary years—how I had suffered, toiled, struggled, hoping against hope,—I felt a tear drop, not my own, upon the hand that he still clasped in his.

“Your name?”

“I chose to wear the proud name my father bore. It never had dishonored me. *His* name, the name

my children bore, was like a curse upon my head. Have I been wrong?"

"Perhaps in *that* you have. All would not recognize or understand your reasons. That matters not, now. It is too late. We may be friends, at least. Emile, we might be more—"

"Oh! listen to me,"—for I sought to silence words I ought not to hear—"If human forethought can avail—if the watchful care and earnest devotion of a true heart can win you back to dearer memories, till the dream of happiness shall become a reality—here do I pledge every drop of blood in my veins to your service while life possesses me! Noble, courageous woman, grant me the right to be your champion, and I am blessed in the mission."

As I heard, I knew my heart had found a home. Bewildered with happiness, I sank on my knees; my head fell on my clasped hands, amidst the trellised vines. There I wept the sweetest tears that ever soothed my eyes. Berthold St. Cyr knelt beside me, and there was that holy pledge approved.

We may preach to ourselves the whole moral

code—may cling with a death-grasp to the old conventional dogmas of society, but neither they nor we can control the beating of the heart, the language of the eye. Speech and silence are both eloquent. A single sigh, a touch of the hand—and the brain reels, the brow flushes, and we stagger as from a heavy blow. Instinctively we clutch at the heart to still its emotions—the wild, unruly heart! It has with one strong bound overleaped the barrier that pride had raised. The scroll, on which we had engrossed our resolution, has been consumed beneath the fire of one single glance. Flight is impossible; surrender alone desirable. “Life or death,” laughs the fiend. The pale lips almost murmur “death,” when the calm angel of Duty imprints a cold kiss on the forehead, and we are saved.

Years of penance might atone for that one strong, delirious dream!





## CHAPTER XXVIII.



LETTER from Dr. Gaston came to strengthen me at this critical juncture ; and much I needed this support. He said, "My peace be with you ! Learn that self-reliance which is solitary and unsympathetic because it is peerless. You are inclined to live in your affections, but you are capable of living in your will, and in your rights ; and the Fate above Jove seems to have decreed that, for the present, you must. Remember that you are your own great end, and train yourself to cut the meshes of sentiment when they grow too controlling. Don't attempt to live an ideal life. Its forms are purely hypothetical, being never realized ; whereas, the acts of practical life, like native crystals, though theoretically imperfect, are real and valuable."

I thought that I had imbibed the principles of

this philosophy, but found that my former blind faith was an illusion.

My vacation expired. Half sorrowful, I said "Good-bye" to my hospitable entertainers, Mary and John Murray.

Berthold was to be my very ceremonious escort to town, for the city was likewise his destination. When once there, I stepped cheerfully into the usual routine of occupation. My classes increased, and I found but little time during the day for social converse; but the evenings were less occupied. Yet a good portion of the time that I could spare was monopolized by "that St. Cyr," as he was denominated by Mrs. Hersey, the friend with whom I was making a temporary abode.

It was too soon for the fashionable portion of society to be at home. Half the world were at Newport or at other seaside resorts; the other half hid themselves in the back apartments of their spacious dwellings, closing the front entirely, and leaving everybody who was anybody to suppose they were out of town. That was a way to make up arrears in the yearly expenses. By that means,



Mrs. Tab could appear in a new full hat, ornamented in the most superb and *recherché* style. And Mrs. Grub has saved enough, by staying at home, to enable her to sport an elegant shawl, and to flaunt it in the envious eyes of her opposite neighbor, who *would* go to Newport, though her husband couldn't afford it, and she must wait till next year for her Cashmere.

Just round the corner is Mr. Telwell, who dared not trust his young, foolish wife at a watering-place alone; and, as he could not go with her, he bought her off with a set of Honiton laces—only three hundred dollars! Poor Telwell!

Neighborhood gossip, I assure you—nothing more. Ill-nature, I declare! I do not believe one half of it.

Berthold came to tell me he was summoned away. A few days, and I should see him no more! How will it be with me, then? Hush, poor heart! Question not! The drifting storm will pass, and leave thee. Let it sweep on.

I had frequently crossed the corner where the apple-woman, Becky Tollman, used to sit. Her stand was occupied by another, and I had no clue

to her whereabouts; and not the least particle of information could be squeezed or coaxed from a surly successor, who evidently lacked those finer feelings which had been the sole charm of her predecessor.

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It was October—sear, brown October, with its heaps of withered leaves, and gusty winds; and one day in that month the sable skirts of the skies were dripping with rain, and the city scowled in gloom. The mud in the streets was ankle-deep; but, booted, and with an umbrella, I went my customary rounds, in spite of the storm.

All up and down the streets, as is usual in rainy weather, miserable-looking children, broom in hand, did their best to make the crossings passable—dodging and ducking the danger of being run over, and stretching eager hands for a penny or more, just as the benevolence of the passer-by might dictate; and, poor things! often disappointed in one, and scouring away, nothing daunted, the moment that they saw an opening for attack on some more favor-

able-looking individual on the opposite side; and sometimes, when the disappointment had been often repeated and keenly felt, a round of curses was bowled from the sweeper's lips, after the inattentive or scowling traveller.

I stopped for a few moments, though the driving rain was pelting against my slender defence, to watch their active and dexterous escapes from cart-wheels, omnibuses, horses' legs, and various other inconveniences that assailed them. Most of these daring little witches took the risk of life and limb quite in sport, chattering like magpies to each other as they stopped to take breath and to count their gains. Bedraggled and spattered with the mud, the wild hair stringing about their poverty-stricken faces, what did they look like? In spite of the rain, I stayed to dream of what they were, and would become. Once they were little, tender, helpless infants, pillowed and nursed with gentlest care—innocent, close watched by angel ministrants. Had the angels forgotten them now—now they were *girls*, exposed to dangers of all sorts, coarse jibes of men, and trampling feet of horses—impurity without, want

and suffering within? And these will be women—perhaps wives and mothers! O God, what training for that holy trust! I could not forbear shuddering, when I thought what these girls might become after imbibing thus early a love for life in the streets; bred in the alleys, perhaps to die there, not in pursuit of honest gain, or of a beggar's thankless pittance.

Where are the mothers of salvation? Where the women God has blessed? Sitting at ease in Zion, heedless of all the gentle charities which they might dispense? What are a few street-sweepers' souls, more or less, to them? Their white comfortable hands are folded on velvet cushions, and daily new dainties tempt their appetites. Their time is all occupied, and a vast amount of money is generously sacrificed to charities, they don't know what—nor when nor how dispensed. Call the maid to dress her lady's hair. There are prayers in the church at ten.

There was a sharp tussle between two of these girls. One had dropped her broom, in making a sudden movement to get out of the way of a pair

of fleet horses, and it was mashed to uselessness. There was another, a puny and sad-faced thing, whom I saw obtaining more growls than pence. But she kept struggling with the mud, plying her broom as though life hung on the sweeping that she did, and not on the money she collected. She was deformed, too, but surprisingly active, as she turned and strove with the taller, stronger girl, who was determined that might should be right, as she wrestled with the weaker to rob her of her broom. She has it! No; the little one holds on yet! The tall vixen twists and pulls. The pale one turns, and clings, with her supple arms, to her last hope. The strife grows warm. The carriages thicken on the crossing. Vixen is pushing the deformed into the thick dangers, under the very bellies of the horses. They will both be killed! No; not yet! Vixen holds up the broom, with a slight "hurrah!" She has triumphed. Why doesn't the little one get out of the way of that carriage? She sees her danger—tries to escape. Too late! She is struck down! Heaven shield her!

I dashed across just as the man on the box, by a

skilful manoeuvre, avoided driving completely over the little body, rolled like a bundle of rags in the filthy street. I lifted and supported her in my arms.

"Is she dead? The blood is oozing slowly from her mouth!" It was impossible to tell how much she had been injured. Somebody got out of the carriage and stood beside me.

"Emile!"

That voice never sounded half so welcome as then.

"Berthold, this little girl is dying, I am afraid. Who knows where her home is, if she has one? Where is the other—the girl who got the broom away from her? Ask, St. Cyr, if any one can tell where this child belongs; we will take her there."

One of the other girls knew. "She lives in Stren's Court, upper end—close by."

"Show us the way!"

Berthold took the child in his arms, got into the carriage, and in five minutes we were in Stren's Court.

In a miserable, dark back-room, upon a bed which bore few traces of comfort, lay poor Becky Tollman,

the apple-woman, helplessly rheumatic. She instantly knew me, and welcomed me, but wonderingly. I told her what had befallen her grand-daughter—for such I knew the trampled child must be.

Berthold laid her on the side of the bed, and we made an effort to restore her to sensibility if possible. It was more easily done than I had at first feared. The outward bruises were not severe. What the inward hurt might prove, could not be ascertained."

The child began to move and mutter, "Leave my broom! I a'n't agoin' to let go my broom!—don't! Granny told me not to go; but I didn't mind her!"

"True for you," said Becky, who had raised herself a little. "You know, ma'am, I'm poor. I've always ben poor; and now I'm sick, added to it. That child's got a heart. She told me, says she, 'I'm goin' out, granny, to sweep the crossin', and get somethin' to buy bread, like the other girls in the court.'

"Says I, 'Becky,'—her name's Becky, too, ma'am, —'you can't do it; you a'n't strong enough.' But since I took the inflammatory rheumatis, we've ben

poorer than ever ; and Lina, serving her time to the mantuamaker's, can do but little out of working hours to help pay for bread. And it's so dark here, Becky can't sew rainy days—an' if she could, earns but little ; and she thought she'd make more of a rainy day on the crossings. I told her she couldn't ; but she would try, and this is what's come on't."

"Will it cost a great deal of money to get me well?" asked the young sufferer, who was lying quite still, with the tears gathering in her large, thoughtful eyes, as she listened to her grandmother's words.

Berthold St. Cyr was there, and both Beckys were silenced with comfort. I almost envied them. They could accept his protection—his care.

And, when he went, I stayed to do what I could for the invalids, until Lina's return. A physician had been called to examine the child's hurts. The hemorrhage had ceased, and her symptoms were altogether less dangerous than we at first had supposed.

At nightfall Lina came. She started at seeing a stranger in possession of the apartment. Another



glance disclosed to her wondering eyes that something serious had occurred; and, with affectionate solicitude, she hurried to the bedside to learn what it might be. A few brief words served to explain the state of affairs; and the poor girl, overcome by her feelings, fell on her knees, and sobbed a prayer of thanks to God that it was no worse. And then, collecting herself, she arose calmly and composedly, went about the preparations for their scanty meal, every moment turning to speak a gentle word, or to send a look brimming with affection, toward her sister and her helpless grandmother.

The apple-woman had told me that her granddaughter was "pretty as a pearl," and so she was. A perfect Madonna face, exquisitely colored and proportioned, with that chasteness of expression indicative of purity of thought and high-toned sentiment, she was superior in every way to her station. Barely sixteen summers had passed over her, and yet the sign and seal of womanhood was there, palpable and perfect. She suffered with and for those she loved. I longed to clasp her to my heart, and call her "sister!"

Berthold came to take me home, and then we discussed the expediency of removing the invalids, as soon as possible, to a better atmosphere than that low, damp room supplied.

“Your grandmother will never be better while she remains here, Lina,” said Berthold, “and I insist, as in a measure I have been the cause of this new trial (artful Berthold, to put it on that ground, so that she could not object to what he proposed to do!)—I insist on making myself responsible for your well-being, until your sister shall recover her usual health. Indeed, Lina, your grandmother does not disapprove, and you must not object; for we are your friends, and friendship has very sacred privileges.”

Lina tried to thank him, and did just what any other grateful creature would do under similar circumstances, burst into tears! So I gathered her close to my heart, and held her there, soothing her till her sobs were hushed, and she could look the thanks she could not speak. Then bidding “Good-night” to the much-cheered trio, we left them.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

**B**ERTHOLD never rested until he found an airy, comfortable tenement, in a comparatively clean location, in which to place "his family," as he called them; and Mrs. Hersey and myself were easily pressed into the service to see that everything was adapted, on a moderate scale, for their comfort. Two rooms (it was almost a palace compared to the dingy room they came from) and a small pantry, well stocked with all that was needful, constituted the new dwelling-place.

Berthold was as thoughtful as a father for his children; for, when Lina took possession of her new domicil, she found receipted bills from the baker, provision-dealer, and coal-merchant, for six months in advance. (Dear Berthold! who could help loving him for his kindness to others, if not for himself!)

Then an easy vehicle was chartered to convey first Becky the elder, and then Becky the younger, to the home prepared; and what was the gladness and thanksgiving of the simple-hearted apple-woman, when she found herself laid on a mattress arranged with particular reference to her old, tired aching bones! Those great thoughtful eyes of the little hunchback, too, looked solemn as stars wondering at the birth of a new world.

"O Granny," she said, "it is so light here, I can sew all day, and help Lina ever so much. I think I can earn a shilling now, instead of sixpence! Oh, I'm so glad! What a nice chair! It fits my back, that will never pain me now as it used when I sat on the old trunk, with nothing but the damp wall to rest against. I am so glad! Just try it, Lina, do. And there is one for granny—poor granny, if she should ever be able to sit in it;" and she looked sorrowfully, and half doubtingly, at the venerated prostrate form.

Lina tried the chair, and rejoiced with Becky the younger, over its evident capabilities for comfort.

But the child was still very weak, and she must

lie down for a little while; to which necessity she patiently submitted. She clasped her small thin hands over her deformed chest, and called Lina, to ask her if she did not think Mr. Berthold St. Cyr an angel.

Lina said, "As good as an angel, Becky; and God has sent him to us."

"Yes," chimed in Becky the elder. "God has sent him. I never could see, afore, that God remembered me, or sent me anything but poverty and pain. I'm poor, and I've always ben poor for these last six years, since these children's father died. And there's ben nights and nights when I couldn't sleep a wink for thinking what would become of us all, next day. But, in the morning, I'd think of something I could pawn or sell that'd last us through. And, somehow, we've got along, and no misfortune has happened to Lina. I felt afeared for her, and I used to get up in the dark, and go round and put my hands on her pretty head, and smooth her soft hair, and cry easy, so's not to waken her; and I hoped no worse storm would ever fall on her sweet face than her poor grandmother's tears: and

t'other so helpless. But I thought 'twa'n't no use to pray. But I s'pose I did pray for all, and didn't know it. And God heard me when I did not think he would. And now I've got faith, at last, to believe that they'll be took care on when I'm no more use to 'em. We've found friends, and our Father in heaven has sent 'em."

And so Becky Tollman, the poor old apple-woman, found joy in believing. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The day of Berthold's departure came—the day—the hour—and he was gone. I sat long, just where he had left me, gazing on the hand on which that last farewell kiss had been imprinted. A strange quietude settled over me with the night-shadows. I invoked the guardian of my soul, and questioned my own doubts. The stern replies humbled me deeply, as I confessed I was no longer mistress of myself. But I made an abdication in favor of the stern dictates of my better nature, and inly pledged myself to keep from him the knowledge of my weakness. He had begged a boon at parting that was not mine to grant. I would have sacrificed my

individual life for him, but those young scions of my blood held a fee-simple of me, demanding my first, best care ; yet, the memory of his last words fell on my soul like the sound of a trumpet on the stillness of night, awakening throbbing answers throughout all the pulses of my being !





## CHAPTER XXX.

**T**WO fashionable young men were sitting at their wine, after dinner. One was the master of the feast, Lionel Blandford, and he was doing that which a man often does after the dessert—telling his secrets freely to his intimate friend.

“An exquisite creature, as you say, Blandford. But don’t be a fool about her, my good fellow. If you are tired of dancing attendance on her caprices, desert! You have made her no promises.”

“Yet I feel like a villain; for, tacitly, I have promised her everything. My acts have all been pledges of love and constancy. By my exclusive attentions I have prevented others from addressing her; and she, with her good, earnest, trusting heart, has believed in me as much as though I had sworn



fidelity to her. I did not mean to carry the matter so far; but we must part!"

"Pooh, Blandford! how sentimental you're growing! Ha! ha! Lionel Blandford, of all men in the world, taken to sentimentalizing! It's a good joke! Ha! ha! Pass the wine. That contemplative face of yours makes me dry as a sponge. Cheer up, man! The girl will be well enough! A few sighs—perhaps tears. But a woman's heart is such an elastic thing some one will catch it in the rebound. Another lover, and the scars of the old wound will be as if they never had been. A girl, fashionably educated, as Mona Cresson has been, becomes the possessor of all feminine arts. The souls of fashionable women are but mirrors of vanity, because they are concerned only with the pleasures of the present. The sense of obligation to the filial or the marital bond gets to be a jest and a by-word. The selfish principles are so thoroughly cultivated, that personal gratification is paramount to everything else. In short, a woman of fashion is—"

"Hold there, Norton! Don't be so severe upon

the women. If all are not pure, and beautiful, and wise, the few who are so are enough to leaven the mass. Besides, Mona Cresson is not heartless, or soulless. I will not hear her traduced! It is not her fault that she loves me with a passion that I cannot return. I will not hear a noble woman spoken of lightly!"

"But you will do worse. You will make her jealous of Mrs. Hersey, and destroy the confidence of each in the other. Not that I care! Woman is legitimate game for man! Maiden or wife—all the same! Ah, Blandford, you are a lucky dog! But the secret's safe, old boy, with me. If I knew you were to run away to-morrow with that piquant little woman, Venetia Hersey, I should be as uncommunicative as the old stone lions at the gate.

"What in the deuce is Hersey thinking of, that he leaves his wife so continually to you; and persists in a course of neglect that would make any other woman a flirt, or break her heart?"

"He thinks," responded Blandford, "that I am not quite a villain, or else he wishes me to become one;—I cannot easily determine which. I shall be

glad to prove myself truer in my friendship than he is in his duty to his wife."

"My dear fellow, friendship is only a name. Don't trust to that to shield you against a woman's charms. In fact, the strongly conflicting interests of society entirely preclude the existence of friendship, as a passion, either with man or woman."

"Would you have me believe that the noblest attribute of the soul is dying out?—that there is to be no more of that divine spirit of self-denial, the only true leaven of humanity?"

"My opinion, exactly. There is nobody left to appreciate friendship. It has long been, in the minds of most men, a mere Quixotism. If one in our age undertakes the bestowal of a generous friendship, it is like casting pearls before swine, trusting one's scalp within reach of a wild Indian's tomahawk, or going to sleep beneath a tree, in whose branches an anaconda is coiling."

"Your comparisons are odious. But, if you thus ignore friendship, what will you do with love?"

"Love! Pooh! the very name makes me sick! There's no such thing, save that acknowledged in

the category of the sentimentalist, believed in by insipid maidens, and limpsy, beardless men. The sentiment, as it exists in the minds of most persons, is subservient to the novelistic tendencies of the age, which teaches the passion of love as a destiny; and many imagine themselves meeting their destinies when they are only yielding to the influences of sensualism. The world must be purified, and the slop-bowl of morality thoroughly rinsed out, before people can even mention the name of *love* without profanity.

"It strikes me that this friendship of yours, as you are pleased to term it, for Hersey's handsome wife, has had much to do with your change of feeling for Mona Cresson."

"I am not sure that it has not.—Seven o'clock, by Jove! Norton, I sup with the Herseys this evening. Will you come?"

"At your service. I am not averse to the society of Mrs. Hersey's new friend. By the by, Blandford, is she wife or widow? There is a sort of mystery about her which is hard to solve. You are doubtless in the family secrets."

"You had better ask some one more conversant with the lady's affairs than I claim the honor of being," replied Blandford, and the two sauntered leisurely up Broadway.

Mr. Hersey had gone to his club, leaving his wife to amuse herself as best she might, as some sensible mammas leave their overgrown daughters at play with wax dolls and toys. It is a wonder if they do not get tired of the senseless forms and glittering frippery, and mischievously take to a very different sort of amusement, that is not particularly approved of by prudent parents.

Venetia Hersey was weary of the monotony of her home. She had no child to gladden the hours with loving smiles and light-hearted play; and she could not but feel that the husband was no more the lover. What though he paid the most punctilious regard to the rules of etiquette? What matter that when abroad he rendered service and devotion of manner, that might satisfy the most exacting of the homage-loving sex, if at home she must content herself with a passing grunt of recognition, entire indifference, or downright brutality? She, with her

fine-spun theories of connubial bliss, drilled into a patient slave, must make no remark when he goes, ask no questions when he comes, but receive him with a serene delight on his return from some dissipating revel. *Her* soul's needs are never to be considered.

Of what was Venetia Hersey thinking—of her husband at his club—the convenient club to which husbands betake themselves, nominally, when wishing to avoid the tedious monotony of matrimonial life—where men congregate to play, drink, smoke, and gossip—the club, that often, like the business engagement, serves but as a blind for the hoodwinked wife?

Of what was she thinking—of the elegance surrounding her—of the Gobelin tapestry—of the lights, artistically shaded, pouring a softened effulgence on the magnificent furniture, pictures, and decorations? No! None of these!

With an effort to keep still, she has thrown herself upon a lounge. Her black, glossy hair has slipped its fastenings, and fallen in shining masses, beautifully contrasting with the crimson of the

damask cushion, against which her head is resting, with one round, white arm beneath it, the other hand in its delicate grasp, half holding, half dropping a book. She reads with her eyes, but it is plain to see her thoughts are elsewhere. The words on the pages convey no meaning to her. She listens, longs for, yet dreads something that is to be. What is it? All at once a painful thought darkens the fair brow. Her lips are compressed. The small hand tightens on the volume; and as suddenly relaxing, it slides, and drops inaudibly upon the carpet. She rises to her feet, and, hastily rebinding the fallen tresses, commences pacing, with excited steps, up and down her costly prison. Her form dilates. Her arms are folded sternly across her heaving bosom. Her step grows firmer, and she looks defiant, with a bitter expression on the full, ripe lips.

Again her mood changes. The sweet perfume from a vase of rare flowers has effected it. Bending over them, she inhales their exquisite perfume. Then she buries her face in her clasped hands; a stifling cry escapes from her throbbing lips, and a

wild swell of passion drifts over and sways her to and fro, till every nerve trembles from the shock.

"O Leon! O God! Is there no pity?" was the ejaculation sent upward, amid the incense of flowers, the trembling flashes of electric light, as the pleading sigh from an overburdened heart.

In a few moments after, there was a stir in the hall, and Venetia Hersey received her guests with womanly dignity. The storm of feeling gradually subsided, and she was herself once more.

I had watched Mrs. Hersey's changing mood with more than friendly interest. All my womanly sympathies were enlisted. I, too, had felt loneliness a burden, and stood, trembling, on the borders of a barren plain, when, in a few steps, I knew that my feet might tread the asphodel, and this sad, weary being, bathe itself in sunlight and verdure. For Berthold had often said, "How is it that you, with so large and catholic a heart to others, can and will prescribe for yourself so rigid a course?"

There stood that beautiful woman, tampering with the fiend. True, she had drawn around her the magic circle that her own lips must grant per-



mission to overstep. I felt, in my heart, that word would never be spoken. Around her was thrown a husband's protection; and I half feared and believed that he purposely exposed her to danger. He had sense enough to see and know what, in most cases, would be the result of such a course, with such impulsive natures.

That fascinating man, her husband's friend, and the neglected wife, were brought into daily and hourly communion with each other; and this was, to say the least, a trial of a woman's faith.

How was it to be with Venetia Hersey? Her spirit, hurt by her husband's moroseness, her pride, outraged by his indifference, would she take advantage of the mild by-laws of society, and the winked-at foibles of her fashionable neighbors, or lay the blight to her heart, and stifle, in despair, her unrequited hope?

Does a man think, when he places a woman at the head of his establishment, and confers upon her the honorary title of "wife," that he has performed his whole duty to her? Does he think her, in reality, the angel, by which name he wooed her, and

believe her to be more than human—that she can be, do, bear all things which he would flinch under and swerve from? Has the simple legal act made her beauty less than it was before a provocation to thieves? Can he think her so instantly endowed with superhuman wisdom, that she may be left freely to the honor of his worthy co-mates in pleasure-seeking and remain unscathed?

I hear the young, true creatures clamoring and carping at me for doubting them. I do not doubt ye all; but the annals of every-day life show us that *Frailty* is sometimes the name of woman. Man only escapes because his actions are less conspicuous; or because *he* is something and woman nothing, until she breaks the laws man makes for her. Then the law suddenly finds her a person, not a chattel.

Man accuses woman of being capricious; and so she is, but not until he teaches her the lesson. When a man is married, and finds himself ill-suited in the match, he has various sources of consolation to fall back upon. A woman has nothing left to console her but flirtation, or needle-work, or an

invalid's couch. If she takes the latter course, to spite him, she rapidly becomes a proficient in hysteria and vapors, bringing in their train all sorts of evils that ever plagued a distempered spirit. With our own hands we place thorns in our pillows, to goad our sleepless heads withal; then toss and groan, and rail against *our fate*.

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My home with Mrs. Hersey was very pleasant. She needed me, for she was unhappy. We studied together, and tried to forget the sorrowful by occupying ourselves with the beautiful.

Many letters came from Berthold, and my heart wavered as the spell of sweet enchantment closed around it. I could scarcely withstand those full, soul-breathing epistles. The hopes, the earnest appeals made me sick with doubt for both of us.

I knew that I ought to deny myself the dangerous delight of answering or receiving such letters; and earnestly and simply told him my impression. And then he needs must write once more; and thus

he spake to me, while I sat listening to the far-off voice, with tears dimming my eyes.

“EMILE—

“Since you reject all interference with your plans, that my earnest wishes for your happiness alone have prompted—since you say that you will not grant me the dear privilege of making your past a stepping-stone to a brighter future—and yet you cannot, will not say that you regret our mutual desire for closer interchange of thought and feeling—I would ask, how long can you endure this torture? How long can you see me bear it? I know you would wish that our correspondence may always be the harmonious calm, the full music of two souls mingling in sweet accord. I am impetuous. But could any man do more than I have done to prove himself loyal? I have obeyed you in all things—left you when you bade me; or, in your presence, stood afar off, that the world, with its thousand tongues of malice, envy, and all uncharitableness, should not couple your name with mine. You said that was the only honorable course; and have I not,

although sorely against my inclination, submitted to the necessity?

“Is it the fault of either of us, that an irresistible attraction has made us forever dependent, the one upon the other? Is punishment due for that which is no crime? Why will you still adhere to this course of cold reserve, flinging me back upon myself, and stifling the voice of nature in your own heart?

“Once more, I make a last appeal to your tenderness. Grant me your acquiescence in such legal measures as will further my hopes of calling you all my own.

Your faithful

“BERTHOLD.”

“BERTHOLD—

I can give but one answer to all you urge. It is the same that I have already given. You reproach me with coldness and reserve. Would to God it were less pain to be so! But, Berthold, moral responsibility is a sacred trust, committed to each and every one of us, in order to preserve the just balance of character. We have not only ourselves to answer for, but others, who are watching

with eagle eyes the path that we tread. The few must patiently submit to the restraints imposed for the good of the many.

“How often must I tell you things which it is so hard to speak? It is useless for me to reiterate my opinion that merely legal forms have no power over the great order of things.

“If you are not content with the highest friendship of which my soul is capable, then your desires are inordinate. Could you read my heart, you would ask no more. I am as I am; and so must I remain till something greater than the voice of man pronounces me free to join my fate with yours.

‘So let me think ’tis well for thee and me;  
Ill-fated as I am, what lot is mine,  
Whose foresight preaches peace—my heart so slow  
To feel it!’

“And, O Berthold, it is better, for both our sakes, that this correspondence cease at once. Until happier days, it shall not be renewed! I pray for you ever.

“Your true-hearted friend,

“EMILE.”

When the letter was gone, there came to me a restlessness that nothing could allay ; except that I had the one consolation, that my kind friends, Mary and John Murray, were now so near, and that to them I could go and freely talk of Berthold. They knew and pitied the heart-struggle ; encouraged me in my determination, while deploring the necessity for it. The love of those noble friends was the oasis in my dreary desert.

Weave in the web of circumstances the troubles of infancy, the sorrows of women, the prayers of men, the hopes of youth, the disappointments of age ! These make up the sombre texture of the fabric which we call life.

I still had charge of Berthold's pensioners—the Tollmans. Old Becky was waning daily ; her star was almost set. But it was such a blessing to see them so comfortable through his agency ! He had written them a good, beautiful letter at New Year's, and remembered them with more than words. They read the letter to me ; and pretty Lina consulted me about an acknowledgment of it. I gave her a few

hints ; and then, from her full heart, she wrote a modestly beautiful reply.

I took a deep interest in Lina, as she did everything with such an innate sense of propriety and fitness. For a young girl who had had no better advantages, she had picked up a large store of knowledge. She had been my pupil three evenings in the week, since Berthold went away. She was a teachable creature, and I could do nothing else for her.

The child Becky had entirely recovered from the effects of her accident, and her pensive face looked at times almost angelic. She had remarkable skill in embroidering ; and the thin taper fingers were rarely idle, though it was evident that the poor, shapeless form could never bear much hardship or fatigue. I still kept busy during all the days. Mrs. Hersey went out a great deal, and I was her frequent companion. Society was a wholesome relaxation to both of us. Lionel Blandford was established on such terms of intimacy with the master of the house, as set at defiance the whole world of scandal, had it dared to look askance at so high a mark as Venetia Hersey.



Warm friends were gathering around the path that I was treading, and the secret keys of many bosoms were given into my keeping. I had words of comfort and hope for all who suffered; and I would not pause to give one thought to my selfhood, wrangling with me always for something it had not—could not have.

One mild spring evening I took my way alone to the little snuggerly where the Tollmans lived. I found old Becky apparently near her departure for the next life. The sands of her existence were nearly run, her thread near its end, "the spinning almost done." She could speak but little; but she said, in her old way, "I've always ben poor; but I'm e'en-a-most gone where I never shall be poor agin. And oh, ma'am! best of all, I've got faith now! I can't say much about it, but I feel it here, comforting and warm, for all the pain!"

A little longer we sat, in the silent eventide, watching the fluttering pulse; and then, after a faint struggle, all was still! Lina and Becky were orphans indeed! Sorrowfully and long the children gazed on the face of their dead. Then we laid her

away in the house prepared for all the living. And now the children must separate, for they were too young to live alone ; and the knot that bound them was untied.

Mrs. Murray would take Becky, who had already learned to love her ; and the child had said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God ;" and it was so.

Mrs. Hersey claimed the right of providing a home for Lina under her own roof ; and she became as her own child. She was very fair, and her sweetness and innocence put an end to all the apprehensions which I might have anticipated from the influences that would surround her in the home to which she was adopted.





## CHAPTER XXXI.

**I**N a piazza in —— street, where the climbing vines were each striving first to crown the slender columns to which they clung, stood Mona Cresson and her brother. A figure was seen crossing the square. She started, flushed, grew pale, and clung to a pillar for support. The brother had recently returned from India, where he had been for several years a missionary. He knew, therefore, but little of his sister's recent history or of her associates.

"What is this emotion?" he asked.

"Do you see that man?" she inquired, as her tremulous finger pointed towards him.

"And your heart beating the breath out of you at the sight. What does it mean?"

"Have you ever noticed the picture on the wall

of my chamber, within? Go now and observe it anew, and tell me what the face indicates."

He went into the apartment, looked thoughtfully at the picture and returned. This was his judgment: "A face of power—a magnetic face, but calm and haughty; the eye, piercing but gentle; a sardonic curl upon the upper lip, but the under soft and wooing as a woman's; the hair tossed with proud negligence from the high, narrow forehead, and a resolute will evident in the carriage of the head. I should say, did a woman give him her heart unasked, 'God help her!'"

"Amen! It is his picture—Lionel Blandford's."

"Well, my sister?"

"Alas! my brother," and her head dropped on his shoulder; "do not call me weak. Were it weakness, I could not suffer thus. He did love me; I fear he loves no more."

"How did he gain such an influence over you?"

"At first, a similarity in our modes of thought and expression attracted us to each other; for it at first commenced with him, despite the seeming to the contrary. I could not fathom the contra-

dictions of his character, yet I respected his genius. Respect ripened into a warmer feeling. He became a friend; and not a friend, 'an untamable and beautiful enemy.' His manner piqued me, and drove me to petulant sarcasms one moment; the next, I admired his non-concession to my whims and fancies; and, after a time, in my soul grew a reverence for him as for a superior being.

"I feared, then, for him! I longed to guard him from myself; and, in solitude, I said, Let it pass. My parasitical heart shall not thrust out its tendrils to fold and cling around him for nourishment. Let them fall rather, wild, unsupported, trailing in the dust. I said it, but did not *keep* my words. I am no longer free in spirit; I am the slave of circumstances. I would fold the cypress close upon my lips, and, within the shadow of a niche in yonder church, would watch his comings and goings till I turned to stone. There would be more meaning in the senseless marble than in this living, breathing form, with its aimless, wandering step. I am desolate, now, and dead at the heart."

"Hush, hush! my sister! Let me tell you some-

thing from my own life. I, too, loved, and hopelessly; saw the woman I worshipped wedded to another; nay, more, pronounced the words that made her his with my own lips; for I was dear to both, and the marriage benediction could not be so precious from another.

"I nerved myself to bear what seemed inevitable. You knew how suddenly I parted from my native land, ten years ago, though you were but a child. In a foreign land, in missionary labor, I sought and found that consolation which everything else had failed to yield. A 'peace which passeth understanding' is now mine.

"Last evening I dared to look upon the face and touch the hand of the being once so dear. My victory over myself is complete! I have outlived my passion for Venetia!"

"Venetia! You, too? Did you love Venetia? No: yet there can be but one like that enslaver of hearts! You must—you do mean Venetia Hersey!"

"Even so. It is of her that I have spoken."

"Oh, then, brother, save her—save me! for I too am lost, if—"

"If what? Your wildness distracts me, Mona! Speak quickly! What mean you?"

"If Lionel Blandford continues his daily attentions to Venetia Hersey."

"Sister, this is a petty jealousy. Who is this Blandford? But it does not matter; let him be who he may, he could have no control over such a woman as Venetia Hersey."

"My brother, you do not know his power. He could win an angel from allegiance to heaven—"

"As easily as Venetia Hersey from the path of honor," said the brother, giving a new turn to the sentence.

"You do not know all that has been," she rejoined. "You do not know how much the character of Mr. Hersey has changed since you knew him first;—perhaps not changed, but showing his real self. He is not noble—not kind to Venetia. She did not tell me so, but I know it for a truth. My intuitions are sharpened by experience. I cast aside all maidenly reserve, and tell you what I would not breathe to another.

"I love Lionel Blandford, and it is consuming

my life every hour that I live, knowing him as I do, to see him so much with her. There is something for you to do at home. That mission abroad has occupied the best part of your life, while your sister, young, ignorant of the world, has been left to blindly barter her peace of mind for what looked fair and faultless, but which alas, was bitter at the core! I have been left without a mother's love to guide me, or a father's protecting care. Forgive me if grief makes me mad, and I say what I should not."

"Has not our sister been a mother to you, Mona?"

"No! no mother; scarcely a sister. What should a sister be? We have lived miles asunder, though under the same roof. She has been always cold to me; repelling my warm nature; preoccupied when I needed her sympathy or aid. Is that a sister's love—or like a mother's care?"

"My poor little Mona, what can I do to soothe you and to teach you how to forget? Come! put by this despondency. We can be happy yet!"





## CHAPTER XXXII.

**A**NOTHER spring went pleasantly by, and another summer came,—summer in the city, when all causes of destruction are at work, and prolific seeds of disease are vended cheap in the markets.

It was the year when the scourge revisited our land—the fearful and mysterious enemy, which, like a poisonous wind, cometh we know not whence, and goeth we know not whither. Whole families were attacked within a few hours, and were dying in the same house—often in the same room. The living deserted death’s victims, and, in their flight, were struck by the pang that told its own horror; and others crept anywhere away to perish. Parents fled from their children, and children from their parents. Few had the hardihood to brave the pestilence that

walketh in darkness—the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

I remained in town and took charge of Mrs. Hersey's house, the family having gone with the Cressons on a long journey to the lakes. For all the terror around me, I felt perfectly well, and would not quit my post, even going into the infected districts as fearlessly as the physician, where I found a sorrowful pleasure in lending my aid to the distressed and suffering.

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For two weeks the scorching sun had distilled the hot vapors of disease, which the night-dews redistilled, laden with disease and death, when, one morning, I received a note from Mrs. Murray, which was as follows :

“DEAR EMILE—

“Berthold St. Cyr and his father are expected soon at our house in the city. Mr. St. Cyr's health renders a voyage to Europe his last hope, and a letter which had been delayed several days, came to Mr.

Murray's counting-room, announcing their intention of visiting us. As soon as received, we telegraphed Berthold, bidding him make himself entirely at home at our house so long as he chose to stay in the city, and that later we would meet him there.

"Mr. Murray is too ill for us to come to town immediately; and, dear friend, I am obliged to beg of thee to make the house comfortable during their stay, for our invalid friend and his son.

"I feel more anxious than I should about the havoc that the cholera is making, from the accounts which we have received; but these may have been exaggerated.

"John says, 'We are asking a great deal of Emile;' and I know it will be a severe trial to thee. But it is impossible to do otherwise. We cannot suffer them to come and go, uncared for; and thy strong heart will be equal to everything.

"Oblige thy friend,

"MARY MURRAY."

What a sorrow was here! A thousand misgivings assailed me. Perhaps he had already arrived; per-

haps the fatal sickness was upon him, and I should never see him alive! There was little time for reflection. I hurried to the house of the Murrays, to know the worst; but at the door I paused, questioning the delicacy, the propriety of thus ushering myself unbidden into his presence.

I had wilfully renounced him, yet, all the while, my soul bowed down in worship of him, but afar off, as I might have worshipped a deity. The peculiarity of my relations with him raised a doubt of the propriety of complying with Mary Murray's request at such a cost. But my anxiety got the better of my judgment. I had a latch-key, and let myself in without ringing, and proceeded directly to the room where I expected to find the housekeeper. She was not there; and I presently found a paper, directed to Mary Murray, stating that she had been seized with the first symptoms of the contagion; and, not able to get any person to take care of her, Dr. C—— had advised that she should be removed to the hospital. She said that the St. Cyrs had arrived, but contemplated returning to a hotel on that very day.

I began to breathe more freely. Several large travelling trunks stood in the hall. The St. Cyr initials were on the covers. How dear those letters seemed to me! Were they gone, or still there? I should know soon. I passed up the broad staircase. All seemed hushed as the grave. I listened; not in vain. There was a faint sound as of some persons stepping carefully in that first chamber. Timidly I entered the darkened room; and there a shrouded figure in grave-clothes, stretched on the bed, arrested my eye, and benumbed my power of motion. This was for a moment only. With a great cry, I staggered towards the ghastly vision, and laid my hand upon the covering that concealed the face which I longed, yet dreaded to behold. The ice-cold feel of death sent the blood back to my heart. I was powerless.

At the instant a hand was laid on my arm—a living hand. I could not restrain a cry of joy as I recognized Berthold at my side. But the flush of fever stained his cheek and burned in his throbbing veins. I pointed to the dead body.

“My father, Emile—you have come in time to

bury my poor father! He died this morning. A nurse will be here within the hour to attend me, for I too am stricken; but, dearest, don't leave me? I must lie down."

He could not stand; and the undertakers, who were engaged in preparing the body for its final disposition, stepped forward and assisted him to another room. Then I saw how he must have suffered, and how ill he really was.

*Leave him!* No! not if the whole world abandoned me would I leave him, in sickness and suffering, to the care of hirelings. I took my place by his pillow for weal or woe. I should watch with him, tend him, pray for him, till a new life should steal back from the gates of death, and he should be reborn the child of strength.

The hours of anguish were endured by him courageously. The crisis passed, and hope dawned with the third day's light, and did not fade with evening. But he was very feeble for many days.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

**A**S he grew better we talked of all things—the past, the present, and our uncertain future. Those long, delightful, precious talks! And then he told me how, in his zeal for his father's restoration, he had hurried on. He had hoped to see me there, just as it had happened. But he did not once consider the risk that a stranger incurred by coming into an infected city. He felt alarmed immediately on his arrival by the debilitated state into which the journey had thrown his father, and had feared they would be unable to proceed on their intended tour. He bowed his head on his bosom, and murmured, "It is all done, now;" and for a while we were silent.

"Emile!"—how his dear voice thrilled me!—"do you stand just where you did? Has there been no

favorable change, from which I may catch one gleam of hope?"

"No, no; none! I cannot even listen to you, Berthold, if you speak thus!"

My voice trembled, for I felt that I stood on the brink of danger. I could not close my eyes. His dear face, wan with pain and suffering, the charm of every word he uttered, the pleading looks of his deep dark eyes, the tender appeal of every motion, as he folded my hand between his own, his recent danger—all endeared him to me a thousand-fold. My heart was melting within me. Away, in its quiet recesses, was a painful consciousness of what might have been, and of what might be. But a colder monitor whispered *what must be*. I was faint from the effort at calmness.

I strove to go, but he detained me, and begged my pardon for the unintentional pain that he saw he had inflicted. I granted it, and was silent. Berthold spoke again: "Emile, what shall I do?"

"Sail for Europe, as you first intended," I replied. "For the love of heaven, go! Do not stay within the region where there is a possibility



of our meeting. Go! for my sake, if not for your own!"

I can scarcely recall those passionate scenes without living over their experience. It is a painful pleasure. Their memory is most sweet and sacred.

Berthold's voice was husky and deep as he said, "I will go, for your sake, so soon as I am strong enough, and will trust to happier auspices for our next meeting. Grant me this in return—nay, I will not be denied!—that you will answer my letters, if your *heart* so dictate."

I promised—said "good-night," and fled to my chamber to pray for him and for myself.





## CHAPTER XXXIV.

**D**AY by day he grew strong—strong to combat with the world, stronger to wrestle with his hopeless passion. I rejoiced, and yet I sorrowed; for I felt that the threads of our life were woven together—I dared scarce acknowledge how closely. I knew that the hour of separation drew nigh, but folded my heart in its pride, and smiled despairingly.

The day came, the hour, the moment. He pressed me to his heart in a silent embrace, and—was gone. A blessed unconsciousness saved me for a few hours the pain of feeling; and, long before I awoke, the ship that bore him was sailing over the flowing sea. When it was too late, I would have given worlds to recall him but for a moment.

Mary and John Murray! What could I have done

without them, then? They were everything to me; and the child Becky nursed me most assiduously.

By the time that I was fairly able to attend to my long-neglected duties, most of my friends had come home from their summer rambles; but, as it was more quiet with the Murrays, I chose to remain with them, and many warm congratulations poured in for my safe recovery from illness, that was caused, as Mrs. Hersey said, by my staying in town all summer.

There was a marked change in the face of my sweet Lina. I saw at a glance that she had passed through some kind of ordeal. It had intensified the expression of her intellectual face. But I knew I should not be long without her confidence, and forbore remark or question.

Mona came, too, to see me. The mock gayety of her manner pained me. Her laugh sounded hollow, and her pale cheek and fire-lit eye told a tale of contest between the flesh and the spirit, with which I could readily sympathize.

Poor Mona! She had once dearly loved Venetia. She looked on her now as though she could anatom-

ize her, artery by artery, to know if there lurked within her blood a quickening power that answered to Blandford's name. Venetia's secrets were kept even from me.

Mr. Cresson came, with his sister. I turned, to observe him more closely as he stood earnestly speaking to Lina. Then and there I read the secret of the change in our fair *protégée*.

"Do you return soon to India, Mr. Cresson?"

"Yes, madam; but not directly. Not until November."

"What do you think," said Mona, interrupting the conversation, "of me for a missionary, Emile? Observe: 'The following paragraph we copy from a leading journal of the city of — :"

"'Miss Mona Cresson, daughter of the late Col. Theodore Cresson, of the United States navy, will sail for Calcutta, in the barque Clinton, in company with her brother, missionary at —. We hear it confidently stated that the sister intends to spend her days in the missionary service.'"

"Mona, pray don't jest on a subject so serious," said, or rather sighed, her brother. "I would you

might be persuaded, in your own mind, that such a course is best, and that we might be no more parted. Yet nothing could induce me to attempt to influence you on so important a subject."

Mona smiled gayly, and shook her finger at him in her old arch way. "See that you don't influence anybody unconsciously, brother,—laying yourself liable to be accused of the crime of inveigling young women across the seas. I shall believe you zealous of being called, not a fisher of men, but of women."

"There is no controlling Mona's spirits, sometimes."

"No controlling my moods ever, is there, brother?"

There was an effort now, in her badinage, that gave me uneasiness, and made me wish her away. We were not in harmony. Lina seemed disconcerted, and held no part in the conversation. The brother and sister shortly took their leave, and I was alone with Lina. She came and sat down by me, and laid her head in my lap, and cried like a baby, without any apparent cause. I felt as though I could cry, but knew it would not answer.

"Nervous little child, that it is," said I. "How

does she expect to meet what is before her, if she cries for nothing—only because a chord has been rudely touched, that was not quite ready for vibration? Have you made up your mind to go, Lina?"

"I could not decide on anything without you. I think I see my duty clear before me. I am warmly attached to Mr. Cresson; and I don't know how much my affectional nature may influence my theological perceptions. Many say, in considering the subject, that I am giving up a great deal. I only feel that it would be giving up everything not to go with him. Although Mrs. Hersey is a mother to me, still my relation to her is merely accidental, so far as human events may seem so. I am not attracted to the life I find in their home. If it were not for my lonely little sister, it would be happiness to me to be Mr. Cresson's wife, and to go with him to India. But how can I leave her?"

I replied, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

"I will be worthy," she said, looking upward, with the holy trust, beaming in her face, that from heaven alone could come the strength that should make her worthy. "But," she resumed, "I think it would be easier to leave father or mother, or many friends, than this one little sister, the only creature I can claim kindred with in the whole wide world."

"Becky is perfectly happy where she is," I replied; "cared for in the kindest manner. She might not be more comfortable in your own house, if you were to marry here and take her to your home; for, who knows what heart-burnings may accrue, when you, the darling cherished wife of some noble man, shall give the pale, deformed girl but a lesser portion of your affections? I say, we know not what may be. Hardship and self-denial are not new to you. Your early trials, and your deep religious nature, seem to have fitted you peculiarly for a missionary's wife. You have youth and health; and with such a man as Mr. Cresson your friends need not fear to trust you. I shall be sad to lose you; but my loss will be another's gain. God bless you!"

Mrs. Hersey strenuously objected, for a long time, to parting with Lina. Her good heart was pained, for she had meant to make her very happy. But, when she saw her earnest, prayerful hope, and steadiness of purpose, she gave her sanction, and did all in her power, by many acts of liberality, to prove her good feeling toward the child of her adoption.

There was a great stir with the preparations for the bridal. Lina had endeared herself to every person who knew her; and friendly little gold thimbles presented themselves, from all quarters, for something to do for the bride. There was such a bustle, and all so busy, that one got no time to be sorry for hurrying her away. Delicate tokens of friendship came every day—presents to the bride and groom. Lina was at a loss to know how she had become of so much importance, but was too happy in her love to be much confused by the attention that she received.

Becky could not understand how it had all happened that her sister Lina was to marry a missionary, and go so far away. But the child under-



stood that there was no remedy for it, and resigned herself to the certainty.

Mona Cresson occasionally dashed across the scene, in a serio-comic vein. Dazzling, eccentric creature, I trembled for her without knowing why, she was so meteoric in her general movements, and, in her more quiet hours, so strangely spiritual. She came little to Mrs. Hersey's—never when there would be the slightest probability of meeting Lionel Blandford. Had she conquered her passion; and did that quiet avoidance betoken self-mastery and high-heartedness, which would be a safeguard against vain hopes?

Lina knew that Mr. Cresson disliked display, and stipulated with Mrs. Hersey that, rather than have her run away, or be married in church, the wedding should be conducted in as simple a style as possible; and it was finally concluded that only the intimate friends should be present. She chose but one bridesmaid—Mona Cresson; and Mona suggested that Mr. Blandford should be groomsman. What strange freak had come over her?

They were to be married within one week of sail-

ing for India, and the few last days were set apart to visit an aunt of Mr. Cresson's, residing in Washington. Mona, too, it was understood, would be of the party, provided her brother and Lina would appropriate to her their last evening in town. She would give a *fête* in honor of the occasion. He gave his consent. We were all invited accordingly, and Lionel Blandford, in his capacity of groomsman, was obliged to attend her on that evening.

Mona seemed cheerful in the presence of her friends and family; and her brother, occupied with his new-found happiness, saw but little of her; and when they were together she appeared anxious to avoid all allusion to the exciting theme of that one conversation, in which she had so rashly disclosed the secret of her heart to him. Indeed, she had confessed to him that she was at fault—that her imagination was diseased—that she was nervous and disturbed without a reasonable cause, and begged his pardon for troubling him with such foolish woman's fancies; that, as no one suspected the state of affairs between herself and Lionel, but called their present disunion a lover's quarrel, it was

best that he should forget all her wildness and complainings, and let matters take their course ; and the brother, in his devotion to the young creature so soon to be his bride, had almost forgotten to notice his sister's changeful moods. Besides, she kept out of sight for a good portion of the time, refusing to see or to be seen.

He, whom I had named in a whisper "my beloved," had written to me from Europe. This letter lay upon my heart, close to the loneliness within it. The sweet memory I nursed in silence and darkness, for who could share or understand my pain ? But when his well-remembered glances streamed into that darkness, they were like fire from heaven, and lighted the whole welkin of thought, and gladdened my spirit with rays of glory.

The mail-days, which brought his letters, were my only holidays. One short year ago, and he was here ; and so much of life had been crowded into that short space ! - The things of to-day are merely lessons, learned with difficulty, but nothing when once acquired.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

**T**HE wedding went off very successfully. The Rev. Dr. T—— performed the service with a simplicity and extempore grace that charmed everybody.

Lina was beautiful; Mona superb; and the gentlemen looked as well as the formal cut of a dress-coat permits a man to look. We were a very merry party, considering the solemnity of the circumstances and the occasion.

Little Becky, with her spiritual face—her distortions of figure concealed by drapery, skilfully arranged by Mrs. Hersey's own hands—like some wandering sprite from another sphere, glided from room to room, and was quite light-hearted about Lina's going away.

Mr. Norton was in excellent humor, and it seemed

that he would never tire of devising questions for that strange child to answer.

Mr. Hersey, the man of etiquette, for a rarity, was really genial in his own house. Mary Murray, in her Quaker dress, looked modest and pure as the lily of the valley. The cut of her garment enhanced the matronly elegance of her finely-developed form, while an unconscious repose rested on every feature of her face—the sign and seal of inward peace. Her worthy consort stood beside her in silent adoration; for John Murray sometimes worshipped the creature inadvertently. If idolatry were ever allowable, John Murray might well have been pardoned.

Once we stood all together for a few moments—John, Mary, Becky, Lina, and myself; and Becky said :

“If only Mr. Berthold St. Cyr were here—our first best friend! Don’t you wish it, Lina?”

“With all my heart, if it had been possible. I received a long letter from him to-day, blessing me so warmly! I almost feel his presence.”

Each of the group said something good and noble

of him. It was such a pleasure to me to hear his praises from such true hearts! I could only say—

“I hope he is well and happy, and has found my dear friend, Ruth Nelby, at Leipsic.”

“Did he speak of her in your letter, Lina?”

“No; it is dated at Leipsic, but it was written immediately on his arrival there. He probably had not met her.”

Mona came to say “good-night,” and playfully reminded Lina that she should be the belle of the feast to-morrow evening.

We parted soon after, and I returned to my dearest home with the Murrays.





## CHAPTER XXXVI.

**M**ONA CRESSON'S *fête* was arranged on a scale of great splendor. The fair hostess was surpassingly beautiful. She received her guests—just nine in number—in the most quaint and singular fashion. She wore rich purple drapery over a full linen under-dress of the most delicate texture. Her symmetrical arms were bare nearly to the shoulder, and her hair was dressed in a style of careless elegance. Her face gleamed with a starry brightness that chilled the beholder even when he would admire.

Mona had never been so resplendent as that night, in her unadorned loveliness. But there was something in her face, fearful, incomprehensible; something suggestive of an impassable distance between her and us. And when Lina, full of warm-

hearted tenderness for the sister of her husband, pressed towards her for the kiss she well might claim, Mona held her off with such an icy hand and so chilling a manner, that Lina shrunk timidly away.

The table displayed luxury, good taste, and refinement. The banquet-room was draped and curtained with the most elegant materials, and the rarest flowers were profusely scattered everywhere. But everywhere might be seen, among the sweetest and most beautiful, a sprig of cypress—mournful emblem of the pall and bier. It would have sent a thrill through every soul that had chanced to interpret the symbolical language of those exquisite flowers, all enfolding the fatal cypress.

Perhaps Mr. Cresson and myself were the only ones, besides the mistress of the feast, who understood them at all. Yet we saw not the end. Once, during the short time we were together, his troubled looks drew me to his side ; and, in his particularly low, musical voice, he said, hurriedly—

“Do you observe my sister, and all this array of speechless messages, which I perceive you read? I tremble for her reason!”



"Yet she looks calm and self-collected," I replied, "and more beautiful than ever before."

"I fear it is the deceitful calm that presages the breaking up of nature's controlling forces in my sister's mind—the calm which precedes the whirlwind. I feel inexpressibly alarmed for her. I wish my departure were not at hand. God help her! She is suffering as woman only can suffer."

We were bidden to our places at the sumptuous table. Mona beckoned Blandford to a seat at her left hand, Mrs. Hersey next him, and her husband, whose presence was secured for this occasion by a special command from Mona—a sort of *subpoena* from a court which he dared not disobey—sat beside his wife. On Mona's right was the bride, like a fresh-blown blush rose. The bridegroom, Mr. Cresson, sat next her, and the child Becky, like a white dove, nestled beside him. Then came our Quaker friends, in their beautiful simplicity of manner, mingling with the world, but not of the world. My seat was by friend Murray. Then came the immediate household—Mona's eldest sister, her husband, and son, a noble boy, dressed as a page, to

attend Aunt Mona. The table was full, but the delicacies were partaken of but sparingly. Mona declared that we were the most unsocial set of beings she ever saw together, and said with an attempt at gayety—

“One would think you were at a funeral feast.”

I observed her frequently, during the repast, consulting a tiny watch, set in the clasp of her rich bracelet, the only ornament she wore. The clusters of many-colored gems betrayed the giver to those skilled in the language of precious stones—“LIONEL TO MONA.”

Who might guess the history of that gift? It clung to the fair, round, polished arm, a constant remembrancer of the hand that had clasped it. Perhaps at that moment she had hoped all, risked all, foregone all, in one wild flash of blinding passion. Then, wakening slowly from that bewildering dream, and looking with strained eyes on the reality of the present, fear and trembling shook her soul—fierce despair at his neglect. Alien from his affection, she was forever lost—lost to herself! Could this courtly man sitting beside her, now smiling up

into her deep eyes, and for that hour, at least, ready to swear allegiance to her—could *he* have done such a thing? For if man ever did homage to woman in momentary self-forgetfulness, he certainly did now to Mona Cresson.

Alas, too late! A few hours ago, one pressure of the hand like that, those few dear words he was whispering soft and low, audible only to her, would have met a happier answer.

"I have been wild and wayward, Mona. Forget, forgive! Save me, and take me back to live in the true heart I have so deeply wronged. And, dearest, fix our marriage-day. I cannot live without you!"

"Mine! mine! all mine at last! But, oh, too late!"

"Too late!"

A livid paleness overspreads her face; great drops of sweat stand on her forehead; that purple hue beneath her eyes—all tell a tale that her words but verify.

"Oh, Mona! what does this mean? Speak!"

Her writhing lips pronounced the word, which every line of her distorted face confirmed—"Death!"

"One moment," she continued, after a pause—"when this agony is past—I'll—tell you more!"

We stood in silence to catch her dying whispers.

She spoke again:

"The sharpest pang is over! Forgive me—all—dear ones—the shock that I have given you; and may God forgive me, as I do all who have ever wronged me. I could not live longer! I have taken poison!

"You will say, perhaps, that it was vain to give a banquet in my very death-hour. Don't chide me for that. I am in a giving mood! Hear me, sister—brother: I am dressed for burial! Let me not be disrobed! It is my last request to you! Leave me alone—with Lionel—for my time is short!"

The wishes of the dying girl were sacred. Slowly and mournfully, one by one, we left them there together.

What passed at that last interview of the wronger with the wronged, none ever knew.

It might have been ten minutes—may-be more—when Lionel called. He was kneeling by her side, and her head lay placidly on his shoulder. The

pain was all over, and soon her last sigh fluttered from her lips. Lionel yielded up that dead form, and went out a changed man. Years had done their work on him within the limits of an hour. His hair had become white as snow. Life had instantly lost its charm for him, and Mona's secret lay heavy on his heart.





## CHAPTER XXXVII.

“‘Is she to be buried in Christian burial, that wilfully seeks her own salvation?’

“‘I tell thee that she is! Therefore, make her grave straight. The crowner hath set on her, and finds it Christian burial.’

“‘Will you ha’ the truth on’t? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she would have been buried out of Christian burial.’”

“I tell thee, churlish priest,  
A ministering angel shall my sister be  
When thou liest howling.”

**T**HEY buried her in her purple and fine linen. They made her grave in the full sunlight, as she desired, and the Greenwood murmurs are pleasantly sounding over the spot. Peace be to the ashes of her, who had, we will hope, through suffering, found a deeper religion to soothe her last moments than that taught in human creeds!

The manner of her passing away never transpired

to the world. That it was sudden and terrible, and that she was gone, was all that was generally known. So she escaped the censoriousness of society, that would have loaded her name with reproach and condemnation. She dared rather approach the presence of the heavenly Father unbidden, than meet the words of opprobrium and shame from human lips. We may pity and deplore her, but it is written, "Judgment is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

And once more through the dusky and motionless past, I saw myself a child, in the old-fashioned square pew, in the meeting-house at Lealands. And the loved voice of our good pastor sounded refreshingly on my dreaming ears as it seemed to utter the merciful words of Holy Writ.

Painfully my mind reverted to another life that had rushed uncalled from the shores of time, drifting out to the eternal isles;—yet it seemed like a dream far away in the ages of remotest time.

These two pictures of life, with their interests, passions, chances, and pitiable failures, looked mockingly on me from out of the past. But Clotho still

holds the threads within her fingers; Lachesis mercilessly twirls the swift-revolving spindle, while Atropos, with the fatal shears, cuts off the appointed measure of life.







## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

**M**Y heart leaped at the postman's ring. A LETTER! dated at Florence, with a long, beautiful, enchanting picture of his home, which might be our home. Yes, from Berthold! But, in such passages as these, he has wronged me, yet unwittingly :

“ You have that regard for names in which those who live a superficial life indulge. But things are of more real importance than names. And do you never feel the emptiness of the mere conventionalities of life? Is there not something higher, better, freer, which the immortal soul thirsts after? Yet the coward heart puts by the cup, blaming the hand that holds it. Emile, without you there is for me no future! Be courageous for my sake; for, in reality, those social laws can claim no strict allegiance from you. \* \* \*

"Oh that I had hope, or will, strong enough to bid you '*come*,' feeling sure that my will would be your law! You are waging a stern war with unrelenting fortune. Yet you would die, sooner than permit my interference. Is this kind? \* \*

"A home is open to receive you. Yet you stand on that cold northern shore, shiveringly, ready to fling yourself into the ocean, rather than the fond arms stretched to receive you. Forgive me, if I speak too strongly."

This letter greatly disquieted me. Should I drink the costly wine of life that he had held out to me? Should I sit with him amid the shade of clustering vines and ripening fruits, beneath that ardent southern sun?

No, no, my heart! Embrace the cross; and, though tired with the conflict, yield not!

So I answered him in this wise:

"While I am armed with this strong resolution to hold myself firm against the sweet temptations and alluring pictures presented to me, then only am I worthy of your great and true heart. Only while

this strength lives in me, can I truly possess you, or you me. Let us still belong to each other, as heretofore, till happier days dawn. It may be true that I owe society no allegiance; but I would be loyal to myself, though it be by martyrdom. I am willing to die in the faith in which I have lived. You say without me you have no future! Let your future be secured by assisting me to accomplish the duty of the present. I will not deny that the common-places of every-day life are often irksome to me. I would fain, if I might, seek some new, unpeopled land where we might rest in freedom,—thinking our own thoughts, and speaking them too, without misconstruction from our fellow-men. That may not be. Believe me, dear Berthold, and let it be your consolation, my life is not all joyless. I am happy, forever, in the precious thought that your noble heart beats so warmly for me. And, withal, on this cold northern shore, are many friends who prize

“Thine in the spirit,

“EMILE.”



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

**I** HAD recently received several threatening letters, anonymous and written in a feigned hand. I guessed their authorship, and laid them aside, without comment, thinking it unnecessary to alarm my friends. I knew that every motion of mine was watched, and that my steps were dogged by one who wished me ill; and, at length, an indefinite sense of dread oppressed me, until I grew thin and nervous with fear. An ardent nature lends a supernatural acuteness to the bodily faculties; and, in the state of unconscious excitement produced by the ambiguous threats contained in these letters, I felt a prey to phantoms, both of sense and sound.

Often persons seemed to hold audible conversations close beside me, of which I was the subject,—

much to my horror and terror,—some friendly, others full of bitter enmity ; and I could not discover which were the stronger ; and those expressions were mingled with many others as strange.

Sometimes I heard strains of music, soothing and beautiful, like the murmurings of an *Æolian* harp,—oftenest, just as I was going to sleep at night ; and, at the same time, as though entirely to destroy the effect of the music, rude, invisible hands assailed me, shaking me by the shoulder, or pressing on the top of my head with what might have been an electric battery, so fearfully did it thrill and torture my nerves.

I could neither move nor speak for some time, and tried to argue myself into the belief that this was only nightmare ; for why should I be the sport of any malignant thing, as these presences, whatever they were, proved themselves to be, by depriving me night after night of my rest, and causing me such suffering ? How and why should I be thus tormented, even if fiends have power on earth ?

My sufferings were intense ; and when I was allowed the power of utterance, and questioned my

unwelcome visitants, strange sighs and threatening touches were my only answers. I arose in the mornings unrefreshed, malcontent. I became absorbed with my own sensations, taciturn, and altogether unlike my real self. I was so heartily ashamed of the matter that I could not speak of it.

I attempted to make some laughing allusion, to try if it would not loose me from the frightful charm. The words died in my throat, and I could only relapse into a stony silence. I saw the alarm I was creating—an alarm I could not dispel—in the minds of my friends. Though they resorted to every method within their reach to restore my agitated mind to its equilibrium, all failed. They insisted on calling a physician. I made no objection. My symptoms were pronounced the result of over-excitement and mental anxiety.

I knew that was all. The physician ordered quiet, early hours, and a generous diet. Quiet! how was that to be obtained, when, through all the long watches of the night, I was harried by imps of darkness?

Yes; I kept all the hours, late and early, and

could not help myself. Could I but see the forms that afflicted me, I felt that in the fulness of the horror there would have been infinite satisfaction. This was not granted, save in a few short troubled dreams snatched from those long fits of wakefulness. Then I saw them,—vague shapes, nodding and jibing at me, and with infernal mirth hounding me down to a valley of darkness. Just as the ponderous gates were about to close on me, I would awake, smothered with fear, and damp with the life-dew starting from every pore.

These terrible visitations continued for several weeks, till an incident occurred which somewhat changed the current of my life, and I found relief from the unreal phantoms engendered by physical pain.

It was evening. After a day of unusual stir and busy effort for me, I had thrown myself, for a few moments' rest, on the couch in a small back-parlor opening into the conservatory, the windows of which were often flung wide, as if to win the lingering twilight for a longer stay.

The house was very still. Mrs. Hersey was at-

tending a party; and I knew the servants were away on that evening, with the exception of Julia, the seamstress. She had just left the room, after arranging the lights, as I requested her to turn the gas on to its fullest extent. I was so nervous that the darkness stifled me. She had scarcely closed the door when I heard the basement bell ring. At another time I might not have noticed so common an occurrence; but the perfect stillness in the house, and the fact that my senses were preternaturally sharpened, caused that sound, subdued by distance as it was, to vibrate with peculiar force on my wire-strung nerves. The tintinnabulation quickened the pulsations of my brain, and echoed among the throbbing particles for minutes after the sound had actually ceased. I could not rid myself of the impression that there was some sort of magnetic communication between myself and the ringer at the basement door. I lay quite still, thinking that perhaps it was another form of spiritual torture by which I was surrounded. I heard nothing more for perhaps fifteen minutes—and I measured time with surprising accuracy—when, as I lay with my



eyes wide open, fixed on the conservatory-window, I saw a man rise slowly to the height of the sash. Entering, he approached the open door of the room in which I was. He came on with a stealthy, cautious tread, and stood in the doorway, where the full light fell upon his figure—and I knew him! It was he whom the laws bade me call my husband—the father of my children. Then he neither spoke nor moved, but stood, fixing his eyes steadily on me, while his massive face, head, and features assumed the stony aspect of an Egyptian Sphinx, while glistening in the white light.

The fierceness of his glance appalled me. I saw that he was pitiless, and awaited my doom in silence. I bethought me of his vow, made long ago. He swore by his right hand, in the face of heaven, that my life should be the forfeit if I dared to quit his side and live apart from him;—go where I would, be what I might, his vengeance should pursue me. And yet I had scarcely feared him; never less than at this moment, as he stood before me with hatred on his hard, stern brow; for I said, “I am only dreaming.”

He seemed to read my thoughts; for, bending his great head towards me, still keeping his eyes on mine, he muttered two words: "*You remember!*" and slowly he lifted his hand to his bosom: it rested there a moment: more slowly yet he drew it forth, and I was not surprised to see him hold a pistol in his clutch. As I arose from my recumbent posture, he deliberately pointed the weapon at my heart.

"Don't attempt to stir, for you are in my power! Your moments are precious; for you have but a few left! The only person in this house, besides ourselves, is in my interest. I have waited a long time, hoping a sweeter revenge than this. But your art or your innocence baffles me. I will do you the credit, madam, to say that you have refused some splendid offers, which you have prudently treated as honorable proposals.

"I have possession of your private papers, and sundry letters from one Berthold St. Cyr. Nay, don't start. I have more to say to you, my wife! I think your strength of purpose is slightly on the wane!" His tone was bitterly ironical. "You

might enjoy some months or years of pleasure before my revenge could reach you. It is my purpose to put an end to these pleasing anticipations. Speak! Your last words!"

For a moment the dreadful certainty that death stood confronting me, caused an icy shudder. In a single instant the whole map of my life was before me, clear and distinct. Every act, every thought was pressed into that fraction of time. My soul looked clear beyond to the blessed shores of peace, and I said, "Do what you will; I have ever acted truthfully and justly towards you and towards my fellow-beings. If sometimes duty has seemed hard, and the knowledge that a happiness might be mine beyond the reach of your cruel hands and harmful deeds, it has been but the passing thought of a moment, banished before it was half-formed. If it had not been so, you have least cause of complaint; for, by right and justice, I am not amenable to you for my human weaknesses, since it is you who have left me exposed to trials which nothing but the most determined courage could have withstood. I do not ask that the years of my life may be pro-

longed. The Father's will still reigns. If you *can*, murder me! I am helpless, and am ready to die!"

I folded my arms upon my breast, filled with a strange composure, when I saw, what he did not, a new actor in the scene. The girl Julia, pale as death, stole in at the open window. For an instant she glared at the deadly weapon that he still held toward me; then, with a frantic shriek, springing forward she threw herself upon his outstretched arm. The pistol went off, and also exploded, and Ralph Grayson's hand was shattered, dropping, bleeding and mutilated, at his side. The ball lodged in my left arm. It gave a painful shock, and I sank upon the couch near which I was standing. Julia fainted at the feet of the wounded man, who looked ghastly in his anguish. I started up as he approached me.

"Tell me," he said, subdued and gaspingly, "that you are not mortally hurt!"

The blood was trickling slowly from my wound. "I think I am not," I replied; "but don't stop to think of me. Attend to your own hurt. If you are found here, you will be delivered into the hands of

the law. Go, instantly! Leave the house! The family may return at any moment."

"Say that you forgive me," he urged imploringly.

"I do; but"—I shrunk back as he came near—nearer—"but do not touch me! I cannot bear it!"

He staggered and seemed fainting. Pity returned. I rose, and, going into a closet, poured out some wine, and resolutely held it to his lips. He drank it, and seemed reviving. Then I took from a drawer in the closet some linen, and with my right hand did the best I could to stanch the flow of blood while he could reach a surgeon.

"Have you money," I asked, "to take you beyond the reach of the law?"

"No."

"There, take my purse." It was tolerably full, for I had that day received a considerable amount.

I dashed water over the insensible Julia, and when he was gone and she came to herself, I began to feel very faint. I directed her to bandage my arm until it could be properly attended to; and then sank into a state of insensibility.

When I awoke it was morning. I was in bed,

and thought how nicely I had slept; but what a shocking dream, and how real it seemed! I was stopped in my reflections by a strange sensation in my arm. I looked at it with a painful suspicion that my incomprehensible visitants had, at length, discovered themselves in a tangible form, and had thus left their mark on me. I heard a low sob near my pillow, and said, "Who is there?"

"It is I—Julia. Oh, madam, are you better? Will you let me speak to you and tell you what is the truth? I didn't know he wanted to kill you. He told me he wanted to speak a few words to you; that it couldn't do you harm, nor anybody else, and he coaxed me to give him the little box that stood on your dressing-table. I did not know that it contained your letters and papers. He said that box was his; that it was worth ever so much money, and that you carried it away. In an evil hour I consented to restore it. He swore with an oath that he would not harm you. But when he came last night, for I had told him that you and I would be at home alone, I felt afraid of him, as he looked so fierce and strong. After I had shown him where

you were, from the balcony outside, I went away, but a feeling of distrust for him caused me quickly to return. I heard him speaking cruelly to you; and when I understood his threats, and saw the deadly weapon aimed at you, my first and last thought was to try and stop the mischief that I had done. I thought I could prevent the result. But oh, I couldn't!"

"But your movement saved my life, perhaps, Julia. Do not distress yourself about that which cannot now be recalled."

"But I shall be sent away from the house in disgrace," she sobbed, wringing her hands.

"Julia, let this be a lesson to you, in the future, never to trust a person whom you do not know, particularly with other people's affairs. I will persuade Mrs. Hersey to keep you yet. You have been faithful in all other things. One need not be cast away for a first and single error."

"Oh, madam, he deceived me, or I would never have been so wicked to you! But, oh, madam, he made me love him first, and talked to me of marriage; and he is so handsome, how could I help

loving him? I did not know so much as I do now. He said he was divorced, but that you should never marry while he lived.

"Yet, I don't think he meant to murder me, only to frighten me; and, perhaps, he thought I might say something that he could make a handle of, for there is no doubt but he has felt very unkindly toward me. But it is over now! His hurt has cured him!"

Mrs. Hersey here entered, and put a stop to our conversation by sending Julia away and taking her place beside me. She asked an explanation of the occurrence of the night before; for Julia's account was of too confused a nature to be well understood. I accordingly explained, as Julia's confession had somewhat enlightened me as to the whole affair.

Mrs. Hersey, starting up, declared that she would have the man instantly arrested; and Julia, too, should be taken into custody. I begged her to resume her seat, and to hear me tranquilly. "It is my wish that he may escape; he is probably now beyond the reach of the officers."



Then I plead for Julia. "She is not very much to blame. Her heart went astray. She listened to the voice, which was to her oracular, and did its bidding, thoughtless of serious harm. She only trusted one who professed to love her, and that we might any of us do."

I laid my hand caressingly on hers. She listened to me, was softened, and promised all I asked. "And now," said I, "you must let me rest; for all this has made me very, very weary."

As the days stole into evening, and the nights into morning, I found that I was freed from the fantasies of my distempered imagination. I had a good deal of fever for some weeks; otherwise, my wound was not very troublesome. It healed kindly, though I still wear the scar, and shall carry it with me to my grave.

The scenes of that night, together with the partial loss of his hand, had wrought a great change in Ralph Grayson's character. He had resolved to leave me at peace, and that I should pursue the even tenor of my way unmolested by him. Of his own accord, and without solicitation, he placed in

the hands of an eminent barrister in the city such papers as by the law would entitle me to be honorably free from him ; thus making all the restitution in his power for the terrible suffering to which he had subjected me. When he went to "El Dorado," as he shortly after did, he persuaded the weak, irrepressible Julia to bear him company.

After a time all these important tidings were sent to my early friend, for he had said that he must come home ; and, for a little time, the thought that he would come swept the complete horizon of thought with happiness, and not a cloud of doubt obscured my one bright dream.

Joyous preparations were made for his return ; but we saw him no more. The ship that he embarked in never came to port, and for many, many months my spirit was wrapped in a deeper gloom than any I yet had known.

Feeling is fragmentary, instinct perpetual ; but never are the dim conceptions of the soul consecutive or continuous. The moments when the electric flash irradiates with light and heat the whole being, when the soul trembles at the sublimity of its own

deep music, are followed by the quiet hush that lulls its tumultuous passions into rest.

On me that slumber fell deep and overpowering.

Then came the gradual awakening to new hopes and wishes. A strong, deep yearning soon possessed me. My heart turned to the land where Berthold last had dwelt. I longed to look upon the scenes which his eyes had so familiarly contemplated. There was my soul's Mecca! I spun life's fibres from the wheel of thought. Its ceaseless motion and its endless hum soothed my pain while aiding my purpose to reach that shore, where, haply for a season, I might dwell among the memorials of my lost idol.





## CHAPTER XL.

**T**WO years passed away, when a great sorrow of a new character confronted me. I was engaged in my beautiful art in the cities on the Pacific shore, having left my boys under competent guardianship and apparently in perfect health. Alas! that appearance proved fallacious. I was suddenly recalled to Headland Home, and hastening thither found them both stricken with the unmistakable symptoms of a fatal malady. The terrible progress of the disease developed itself with alarming rapidity. By my heart's dear jewels I kept my place constantly. Their hueless palor bedimmed my own mournful cheeks. There was no art to save my precious blossoms from the vault of death, and I watched with sad forebodings my

"Double treasures, failing in their prime,  
And from life's music slowly losing time."

The dreary winter passed and the summer went by in suffering of body and anguish of spirit—fluctuations which brought hopes that faded into despair. We were a trinity of sorrows—my twin boys and myself. Life was very sweet to them. It was hard to put it by. Oh, how gladly would I have drained my heart's last drops to eke out their existence! In the Autumn, to appease their longings for the breath of the pine-groves, I took them up in the arms of a mother's mighty love and bore them away to the South, out of the reach of the Northern winds—but, alas! unavailing! Still they lingered, as one who saw them has described—

“Two pale forms resting from life's song unsung—  
Eighteen mild Junes, and Nature's gentle voice  
Has bade the summer and themselves rejoice;  
But when the winter with its soft white hand  
Shall spread its mantle o'er the slumbering land,  
Two new partakers of death's long repose  
May fold their arms beneath sepulchral snows.”

In January they left me both together. As if one soul had animated their two bodies, they joined hands and passed out, as they had entered, the gates of life, side by side!

So again the angel of sorrow descended into my soul. I have been a wanderer in many lands since then. I have dwelt in the Eternal City—I have mused on the banks of the golden Arno—I have waded knee-deep in the ashes of ages that cover the smouldering fires of Vesuvius—I have stood near heaven upon the summits of the icy Alps, and have heard the sobbing mountain-rivers pour their majestic music down the snow-wrapped hills—I have dreamed in Venice while gliding in dark gondolas upon the silver liquid thoroughfares, where glittering towers are softly pictured along with gorgeous palaces of golden clouds sailing in beauty through the blue ecstatic heavens, but never anywhere has the peace that I once knew revisited my soul!

As I sit here to-day gazing out upon the sea, it seems sometimes that my thoughts are as evanescent as the foam on the billow yonder—that lifts itself at one moment to the all-embracing sunlight, and then sinks again into the black furrows of the waves of forgetfulness; yet the crested foam is still the crowning beauty of the wave. Thus in my twilight dreams I dimly see the outline of forms that

appear to me from behind the veil. I catch soft whispers of remembered voices, or hear familiar footfalls lightly sounding on the chamber-floors. The doors of dusty rooms creak upon their hinges, when no living thing except myself is housed within. Etherial messengers descend upon the shining ladder whose top is hidden in the glorious light and the un conjectured beauty of the mountains of cloud-land.

“The loved are rarely lonely : round them still  
The space is rife with spiritual presences ;—  
As bees to flowers pay musical obeisance,  
These haunters so fulfil fond, welcome tasks.  
Nor are the loving lonely ! Like far seas  
Where man is not, yet living things, the breeze  
And bounding wave inhabit, they have shed  
Deep in their hearts, howe’er remote from life,  
Images of the absent and the dead,  
And therefore know not loneliness.”

And memory often bears me back to that joyous  
time when there were

FACES AT THE WINDOW,

“Peeping forth to welcome me—  
Rosy, starry, cherub faces,  
All a-dimple with their glee !

And I hear again the gladness,  
Hear the merry ringing shout,  
Many a word and many a token  
From their joyous hearts poured out!  
From that window looked the children:  
I in fancy see them still,  
While an endless yearning passion,  
Wild heart-burnings, waste my will;  
And I linger on the threshold,  
Ere across the stone I go—  
Ope the door! Where are the faces?  
Where is last year's fall of snow?

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Ah, how cold and still the place is,  
Where the children used to play,  
When each nook was gayly vocal  
With the words they loved to say!  
\*   \*   \*   \*   \*  
Other faces at the window  
Of that haunted house of mine,  
Gleam upon me like the starlight,  
Firelight, sunlight of my prime:—  
Then I fold, in deep dejection,  
O'er my lips the ashen veil,  
And go forth with weary footsteps  
Murmuring to the wind's low wail!  
Thus with faltering thought I linger  
Round the scenes to memory sweet,  
While the rustling leaves of Autumn  
Crisp and redden round my feet.



To many it may seem that a life so apparently vastated of delight and hope at the sources toward which the soul turns with brightest anticipations, must have been rendered thoroughly intolerable. It may seem so to those who have never suffered, but a life of extreme anguish has royal compensations. Though my sorrows may never be uprooted, I have passed beyond the possibility of being completely engrossed by them. The pleasures of social intercourse, indeed, have no power to charm me back to the world. I have yet a daughter, and for her sake, and for that of my "beautiful art"—the other child of my studies and affection, whence I derive sustenance and hope—I wear a placid brow and have brave and cheering words for those who may need encouragement or consolation.

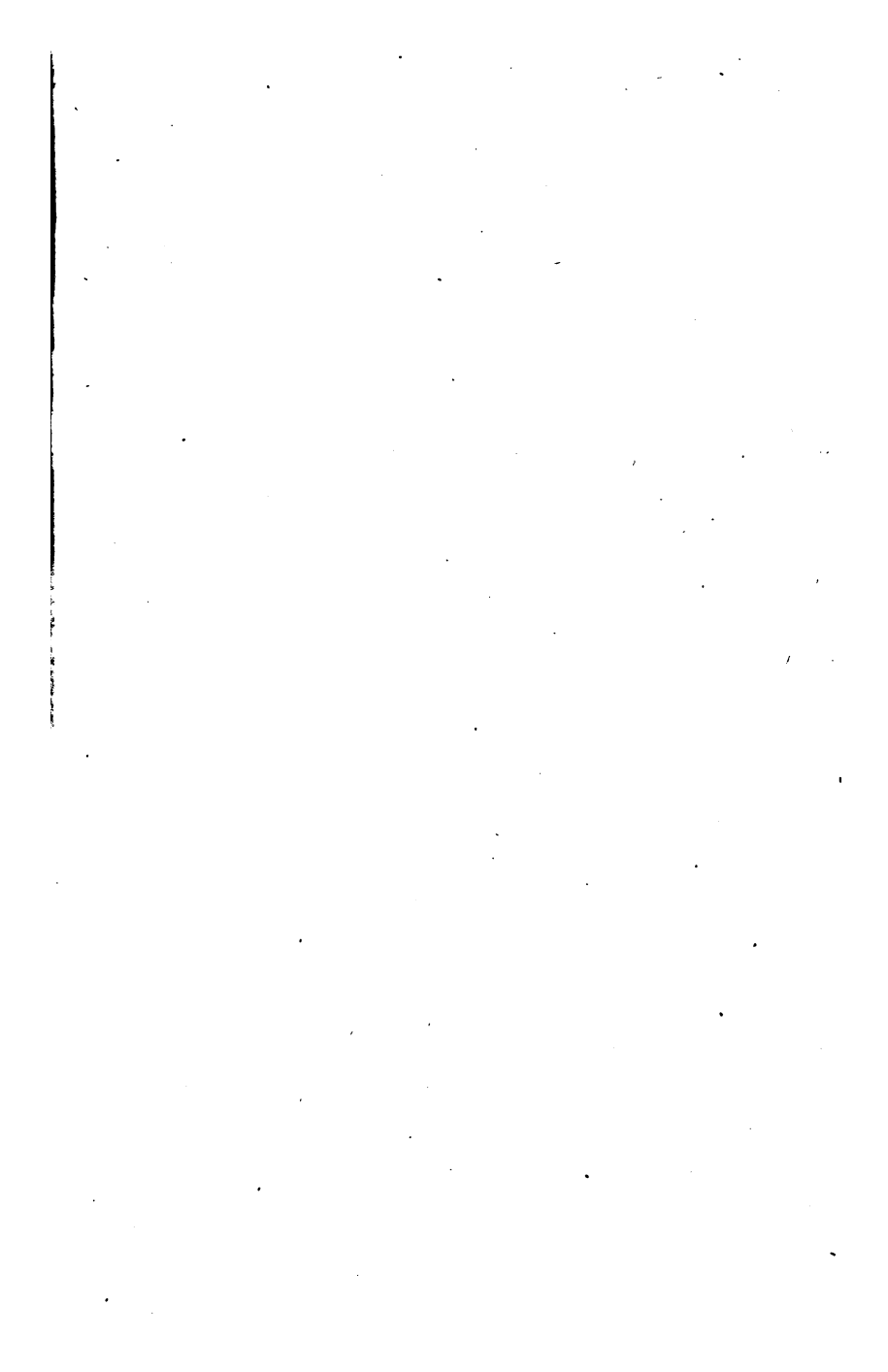














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